HOME 48th Anniversary Celebration
Energizes, Inspires, and Raises Crucial Funds

By Shannon M. Koehn

The newly polished grandeur of the Buffalo Niagara Convention Center was the place to be on Thursday, April 29th. HOME celebrated its 48th Anniversary with a fun-filled evening themed “Inspiring Opportunities.” Nearly 250 supporters of fair housing enjoyed mingling with friends, new and old, during the festive cocktail hour. They were greeted by HOME staff and some of our youngest members—Children for Change and Teens for Tomorrow.

The cocktail hour offered an opportunity for guests to try their hand at winning a wide variety of themed baskets and silent auction items—all donated by HOME members and local businesses. The melodic sounds the Hutch Tech Jazz Band, under the direction of Ben Boyar, entertained and showcased the talents of local student musicians for the third consecutive year.

The evening remained celebratory as the program, emceed by HOME’s newest ambassador—Rob Lucas from Star 102.5’s Morning Show, began. An official proclamation from Erie County Clerk Kathy Hochul, declared May as HOME month. Past Chair and steadfast HOME supporter George Hezel described the remarkable progress of the “Home for HOME” project on the corner of Main and West Ferry and even shared his own “prom haircut” memory of a barber shop at that special intersection. The project ‘went public’ with HOME’s family of supporters, as George promised that HOME would be in contact with guests within the next 90 days.

A delicious dinner and energetic live auction followed. Beginning with “That Same Guy”, HOME’s own Mark D. Evans with the warm up balloon auction which featured HOME’s Children and Teens; followed by Buffalo’s Premier Auctioneer Cash Cunningham. Delta Development and Kensington Village engaged in a lively bidding session for Lamar Advertising’s billboard donation. Justice Norman Joslin made the high bid for the always-popular vintage presidential campaign button collection and the Buffalo Staycation Package. Finally, guests were able to make charitable contributions to HOME’s Fund-A-Family program. All in all, the fundraising efforts of the evening raised nearly $22,000.

HOME appreciates all who supported the event, through their generous donations, sponsorships, program advertising, ticket purchases, basket raffle chances, membership renewals, candy and tee shirt purchases, and live auction bids. HOME provided many opportunities to help, at many financial levels, and the attendees responded enthusiastically.

The evening highlighted several deserving award recipients who fulfill HOME’s mission of diversity, equality and fair housing—either directly with the agency or within the community.

Board Chair, Gilbert R. Hernandez, received HOME’s highest honor—the James Crawford Award for his many years of leadership in advancing the cause of fair housing.

(Continued on Page 7)
From the Director:
LIKE A MARATHON
by Scott W. Gehl

This is written on the eve of the Buffalo Marathon. I have always considered marathons something of a metaphor for the work of HOME.

Last year 5,457 individuals turned to HOME for help on a range of matters: discrimination, landlord-tenant issues, help in understanding fair housing law, mobility and homelessness prevention services, and an incredible range of housing or human service needs. Somehow, HOME was able to provide assistance.

In addition, HOME reached 3,523 other Western New York residents who attended one of 205 education presentations and touched the lives of tens of thousands of others through our publications, transit advertising and more than 70 media appearances.

HOME’s accomplishments seem all the more impressive when you understand this was done with a staff of ten and a budget of approximately $700,000.

Thanks to the generosity of the John R. Oishei Foundation, the invaluable work of an enhanced Community Housing Center continued for a third consecutive year. Concerned about documenting outcomes, the Foundation facilitated the hiring of outside evaluators, Community Development Professionals of Rochester.

The evaluators concluded that HOME’s Community Housing Center and its case management program “demonstrate the potential of well-managed pro-active integration programs that help families find safer living conditions in less poverty-affected neighborhoods can help break the cycle of poverty...”

One would think that so successful a program would be welcomed in a metropolitan area which demographers have termed the sixth most segregated in the nation. Instead, we work furiously to find support to continue the CHC once the three-year generosity of the Oishei Foundation comes to an end.

Challenging the status quo

Last year HOME filed 18 discrimination complaints on behalf of bias victims—alleging violation of federal, state or municipal fair housing laws. More than three times as many discrimination cases were conciliated prior to commencing legal action.

Included in this number were complaints filed on behalf of People, Inc. and HOME after the Town of Orchard Park had reversed its earlier support for building 43 units of affordable housing for senior citizens. Despite unanimous support for the project from neighbors, the Town refused to rezone 2.1 acres of undeveloped land—effectively blocking the $5.3 million federally funded development. Following investigation by state and federal agencies, HOME’s complaints have been forwarded to the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice, which has determined to open a formal investigation into the matter.

Assuring the future

This space has been used before to document the four year effort to build a Home for HOME at Main and Ferry. Thanks to our dedicated development team, construction is well underway and projected to conclude before year’s end.

In the last decade of the last century, HOME’s leaders began efforts to assure the future of fair housing in Western New York by creating the John Howland Koekkoek Endowment for Fair Housing Education. Beginning with only a few thousand dollars invested first in certificates of deposit and then in mutual funds, HOME has slowly grown its endowment, which in April of 2011 had a balance of $182,205. After due diligence, the Board of Directors voted to entrust management of the Koekkoek Endowment to the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo, which manages endowments for some of our region’s largest non-profits.

Marathons come to an end after 26.2 miles; however the struggle for civil rights has no such finish line. Accordingly, we must assure there is a HOME.

Staff change

Shortly after the 48th Anniversary Celebration, the HOMERS (as our staff is collectively known) gathered to reluctantly say good-bye to Bookkeeper-Data Specialist Faith Perry, who was a valuable member of the staff since 2008. Two weeks later—and those were challenging weeks—Sandra Currie assumed Faith’s duties, after a 31 year career with the Buffalo Museum of Science. We wish Faith well.
SEXUAL HARRASSMENT & HOUSING DISCRIMINATION

By Jennifer Metzger Kimura

When is a safe neighborhood not really safe?
Imagine that you are a single mother with two young children living in Niagara Falls, struggling to get back to the suburban community where you grew up and where your family still resides. This was the case of HOME’s client. Ms. J had finally found just the right apartment in that community, which was perfect for her family. She met with the landlord and was able to rent the unit. She was thrilled that she could move her family back to an area she considered safe and that was close to her family support system.

Soon, however, she came to realize that even though her new neighborhood may have been safe, her living conditions were not. Shortly after moving in, her landlord started to request sexual favors in exchange for a decrease in rent, payments of day care costs, and even large sums of cash.

Ms. J decided to confront the landlord and explain that his sexual advances were completely unwelcome and extremely upsetting. During this time, the landlord explicitly asked again how much she would accept for oral sex. After stating she was not interested, the landlord kept inquiring as to how much it would cost for sex.

Ms. J told the landlord she was very uncomfortable and asked him to leave. Still he continued to stop by unannounced, which also caused Ms. J’s anxiety levels to increase. His behavior became so pervasive that Ms. J. had to seek medical attention for some relief.

However, still the landlord would not take no for an answer and inappropriately touched Ms. J. That is when she filed criminal charges against him. Furthermore, on top of the sexual harassment that Ms. J. had to endure, the landlord attempted to evict her in retaliation.

Finally, Ms. J contacted HOME for assistance in this matter. Many are unaware that sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination under federal, state and local fair housing laws. For a landlord to discriminate against any person in the terms, conditions and privileges of a rental of a dwelling because of his/her sex is unlawful.

Ms. J and HOME filed housing discrimination complaints with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which were subsequently sent to the New York State Division of Human Rights which is investigating.

This is yet another case which illustrates that housing discrimination can take many forms.

HOME FEATURED ON HOCN PANEL

Shannon M. Koehn, HOME Associate Director, participated in a panel discussion on Thursday, June 16th moderated by Stephanie Simeon of Heart of the City Neighborhoods, Inc. at the Theatre of Youth after a screening of the documentary Flag Wars. Other panelists included Aaron Bartley, executive director of PUSH Buffalo, and Harvey Garrett, executive director of the West Side Community Collaborative.

“Flag Wars” is a film regarding the effects of gentrification on the struggling neighborhoods of Columbus, Ohio. The panel agreed that the effects of gentrification vary widely with particular local circumstances and change-in-fortunes, in communities and in populace. It’s an abiding feature of urban life. They also concurred that change almost always involves winners and losers, and unfortunately, low-income people are rarely victorious. Buffalo residents, community organizations, developers, and government officials struggle to manage these inevitable changes to create a win-win situation for everyone involved. Shannon found the event encouraging and said “Buffalo truly is the City of Good neighbors and contrary to a lot of what media often reflects, there are groups of concerned WNYers actually making a difference. It was wonderful to be a part of such a group at the HOCN event!” For questions or to express your concerns on related topics feel free to contact HOME at 716.854.1400. We’d love to hear from you.

HOME Toured the Town

On Saturday, May 21st, more than 25 HOME members and friends experienced firsthand Buffalo’s magnificent historical and architectural heritage. After all, “Buffalo is home to some of the greatest American architecture of the late 19th and early 20th centuries” - The New York Times. It was a combination fundraiser and social event for friends of fair housing.

The tour, led by long time HOME member and docent Marge Murray of Preservation Buffalo Niagara, began at 617 Main Street and covered many blocks. Beautiful downtown landmarks provided a stunning backdrop for Buffalo’s most important stories, and these stories came alive on the two-hour walking tour that included viewing the exteriors of the Buffalo Savings Bank, City Hall, Lafayette Hotel, and Old County Hall. All were magnificent! The group explored Niagara Square where City Hall dominates the skyline and is one of the most famous landmarks in Buffalo. The participants spent time admiring the building’s finer points, including its many statues and carvings that go unnoticed when driving by.

Participants also visited Lafayette Square that incorporates Buffalo’s Soldiers and Sailors Monument and the Liberty Building. Roosevelt Plaza, surrounded by the Hyatt Hotel and the Electric Tower and St. Paul’s Cathedral was also a popular stop. The tour also provided access to the wondrous interiors of the Ellicott Square Building, the Guaranty Building, the Market Arcade, One M&T Plaza, and the Old Post Office that is now used by Erie County Community College.

Highlights included impressive architecture, period details and a park-like setting. The group enjoyed an informative and pleasant afternoon that ended with a lunch and informal tour of the HOME office at the EMI Building, 700 Main Street.
MARK J. BELLANCA, CPA, P.C.

INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT

The Board of Directors

Housing Opportunities Made Equal, Inc.
Buffalo, New York

I have audited the accompanying statement of financial position of Housing Opportunities Made Equal, Inc., as of December 31, 2010 and 2009, and the related statements of activities, functional expenses and cash flows for the years then ended. These financial statements are the responsibility of the organization’s management. My responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on my audit.

I conducted the audit in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards. Those standards require that I plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement. An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. An audit also includes assessing the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall financial statement presentation. I believe that our audit provides a reasonable basis for our opinion.

In my opinion, the financial statements referred to above presented fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Housing Opportunities Made Equal, Inc. as of December 31, 2010 and 2009 and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the years then ended, in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles.

Mark J. Bellanca, CPA, P.C.
April 9, 2011

See accompanying "Independent Auditor’s Report" and Notes to the financial statements.
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 2010-2011

Chair of the Board Gilbert R. Hernandez is retired from the NYS Department of Labor. He is a board member of Hispanics United of Buffalo and Alliance and serves as treasurer at St. Paul’s Episcopal Cathedral. He is HOME’s 2011 James Crawford Award recipient.

President Janet E. Barnes is a retired principal and administrator in the Buffalo Public Schools. She is a member of The Links, Inc. of Erie County, and plays leadership roles in the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and the National Assoc. of Negro Business and Professional Women’s Clubs.

Senior Vice President Diana Cooke teaches special education at Bennett H.S. She has her Masters of Science in special education from D’Youville College. She chairs HOME’s Membership Committee.

Vice President 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 Committee.

Secretary Mary Jo Giambelluca is skilled in community education, advocacy, legislative issues, personnel management, program development and evaluation, and grant writing. 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.

Treasurer Susan M. Fayle, is Executive Director of Trinity Tower Apartments of Buffalo, Inc. She has worn many hats for HOME, having also served as Chair of the Board from 2002-2004.

NEW BOARD MEMBERS:

Melissa A. Cavagnaro, Esq. is an Associate Atty. with Lipitz 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 Communications from Alfred University and is a graduate of the University at Buffalo Law School.

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.

Debbra M. Ransom is the 2011 recipient of “Roses for Outstanding Women” honored for service to her community and the city at large as former commander of the Jessie Clipper American Legion Post 430. She was the first female to hold this position and was simultaneously the President of the Auxiliary at the American Legion Bennett Wells Post No 1780.

Robert M. Silverman, PhD., is an Associate Professor at the University at Buffalo Dept. of Urban and 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.

CONTINUING BOARD MEMBERS:

Christina Akers holds a Masters in Urban Planning from the University at Buffalo, and is pursuing her law degree at the University of Buffalo. She is an active member of HOME’s Membership Committee.

Daleylah D. Al-Haqq holds a Masters in Urban Planning from the University at Buffalo and is a Housing Development Specialist with Heart of the City Neighborhoods, Inc. She divides her time between grant research/writing and project management. She also serves on the boards of Urban Roots, West Side Housing Partnership and Erie County Fair Housing Partnership and represents the Ellicott District as a Housing Court Liaison.

Grace Andriette, Esq. is Supervising Attorney for the housing unit of Neighborhood Legal Services, Inc. She was a contributor to A Guide of Landlord Rights and is Vice President of the Erie County Fair Housing Partnership.

William W. Berry, Esq. served as co-chair of the Inclusion Task Force. He is currently Supervising Attorney at Legal Services for the Elderly, Disabled and Disadvantaged 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 19 years. She currently serves on the boards of Gilda’s Club WNY and Consumer Credit Counseling Service. Nancy is an adjunct professor at Canisius College, Dept. of Communications and Leadership.

Paul B. Curtain, Esq. is a Staff Attorney in the Civil Unit at the Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo, dealing with many landlord/tenant issues. He’s served as a Public Defender in Buffalo Housing Court. He has a strong interest in resolving housing and employment issues for ex-offenders re-entering the community.

Tina M. Destro is a Branch Relationship Banker with HSBC. She holds a BA in Journalism from Buffalo State College and a Master’s Degree in Professional Leadership from St. Bonaventure University.

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). He chairs HOME’s Personnel Committee.

Elizabeth Fox-Solomon, Esq. is the confidential law clerk to a NYS associate Supreme Court Justice. A graduate of the University at Buffalo Law School, she was an active participant in the Affordable Housing Clinic and served as executive editor of The Buffalo Public Interest Law Journal.

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

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 Nothnagle Property Realtors.

Dan D. Kohane, Esq., a Senior Partner at Hurwitz and 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 Crawford Award in 1993 and the Sarah G. Metzger Human Rights Award in 2000.

Laura Krolczyk is the Director of Government and Community Affairs for Roswell Park Cancer Institute and is a 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.

Samuel E. Loliager is professor emeritus of Sociology at Niagara County Community College. He is the NYS Coordinator for United Church of Christ Coalition for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Concerns, and is a consultant to UCC’s Open and Affirming Program. He serves as President of Opera Buffs of WNY and Chair of HOME’s Anniversary Celebration.

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CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE CAUSE (Donations received 1/1/10-3/31/11)

BENEFACtor $5,000+
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Know Your Home Board Members
(Continued from Page 5)

DEPARTING BOARD MEMBERS
Maurice R. Brown is a Political and Community Organizer for 1199 SEIU United Healthcare Workers East. He is a recipient of the “Men Moving Forward Award”. Maurice will remain actively engaged in HOME’s membership committee.

Deborah A. Dalhberg is a longtime member of HOME and recently served as board secretary. She also carries the distinction of having served as HOME’s first Fair Housing Initiatives Program Coordinator.

Janet Meiselman is President of Oxford Consulting Inc., a board member of Erie County Fair Housing Partnership, Homeless Alliance of Western New York and Massachusetts Avenue Project. A member of the Program Operations and Planning Committee, she has spearheaded the Main-Ferry Project. She was 2002’s recipient of the James Crawford Award.

Hon. E. Jeanette Ogden is a Buffalo City Court Judge as well as Acting Judge for Erie County and Family Court system. Her community memberships include the Black Leadership Forum, Erie County Chapter of NAACP, and Mt. Olive Development Corp.

Joelle Rueuttimann earned her BA in Political Science from Niagara University in 2006 and her Masters in Urban Planning in 2009 from the University at Buffalo. She has enjoyed working as the Homeless Alliance of Western New York. She currently works for Catholic Health Systems in the Governance Department and volunteers with the West Side Housing Partnership and the Elwood Village Assoc.

HOME—A CEPA Visionary
by Mary Leahy

On Thursday, May 19th the perspectives of some of Buffalo Niagara’s most interesting and influential people, including HOME’s Associate Director Shannon M. Koehn, were viewed through their photographs of our region’s places and events. It was an exciting evening held in CEPA Gallery’s (www.cepagallery.org) exhibition space at Market Arcade. Audience members enjoyed a fun and informative evening, together with good food, good friends, and the knowledge that they were supporting one of the region’s most important and vibrant cultural organizations as well as their favorite non-profits.

“This year we had an especially delightful and diverse group of participants,” noted Sean Donaher, CEPA Gallery Executive Director. “Our Visions VIPs truly represented Greater Buffalo and came from the arts, business, sports, community service and faith-based organizations.” As it has every two years since 2005, CEPA Gallery invited 100 individuals with a unique community perspective to take photos with single-use Kodak cameras. The resulting film was then professionally developed, reviewed by a panel of professionals, and the best print was framed and matted for inclusion in a special exhibition that ended with a silent auction featuring all of the Visions works. Shannon photographed HOME’s new neighborhood on Main Street near West Ferry. The judges selected this bright, colorful photo of the Car Wash at 1582 Main Street. Which now adorns the walls of HOME’s office. Kudos to Shannon!

To report discrimination, call 716-854-1400.

48th Anniversary Celebration
(Continued from Page 1)

Columnist Bruce Andriatch and The Buffalo News were honored with HOME’s first ever Media Award for his article about high school to college diversification: “A Look Inside Ourselves for a Basic Truth.”

Exceptional volunteers, Candace L. Koehn, Marguerite Metzger and Susan E. Alford, were honored for their outstanding service to HOME. All are pictured with long-time Board Member and Celebration Chair Samuel Loliger.

This year’s Joanne Champion Granger Scholarship recipient is Miss Lavanya Rao of Williamsville East High School. Lavanya stopped to pose with her mom and Dr. Carl and Eloise Granger.

New HOME board members were introduced to the HOME family. Duane Madyun, Debbra Ransom and Dr. Robert Silverman were welcomed. All will serve two-year terms along with Melissa Cavagnaro who was elected to fill a one-year term. In addition, HOME re-elected incumbent directors Nancy Blaschak, Paul Curtin, Tina Destro, Philippe Deterville, Thomas Dolan, Elizabeth Fox-Solomon, Gilbert Hernandez, Dan Kohane, Laura Krolczyk and Samuel Loliger. Elected to one-year terms to lead the board were Gilbert Hernandez, as chair; Janet Barnes, president; Diana Cooke, senior vice president; Philippe Deterville, vice president; Mary Jo Giambelluca, secretary; and Susan Fayle, treasurer.

HOME’s 49th anniversary celebration will be held in Spring of 2012 and should prove to be another wonderful fundraising fair housing event! If you are interested in helping to plan that event, please contact the HOME office at 716.854.1400.
HOME NOW ACCEPTS PayPal

Are you looking for a true “win-win” opportunity? Why not go green and donate to a worthy non-profit organization electronically, by using PayPal?

HOME depends on the generosity of area businesses, local groups and individuals for their generous donations, purchases and membership dues support. We are now offering our donors a more simplified, safe and convenient approach to making donations, purchasing HOME wares (T-Shirts, Coffee Mugs, etc.), event tickets or renewing memberships through PayPal on the HOME website (www.homeny.org). The PayPal option is featured on every page of the website. And, best of all, it’s free! You, the buyer, pay no fees or service charges. The receiver of your payment pays a small processing fee, similar to the fee charged when accepting a credit card payment.

PayPal is an electronic, online payment service. When you set up your PayPal account, you can arrange to have your payment deducted from either your Visa, MasterCard, Discover, American Express, savings, checking or debit account or even an accumulated PayPal balance. PayPal is used by over 90 million people worldwide and is secure. It uses the latest anti-fraud technology.

Longtime HOME member Mark D. Evans highly recommends it and states “I’ve used PayPal since 1998 in several thousand eBay transactions. I have not had a single problem with it in those many years. It’s convenient, easy-to-use and safe. Unlike paying directly with a credit card or personal check, with a PayPal account you can pay thousands of different vendors or sellers, but only PayPal sees your account number.”

HOME NIGHT AT THE BALLPARK

A hot dog at the ballgame beats roast beef at the Ritz . . . at least that’s what Humphrey Bogart said!

Join HOME for its first-ever “Night at the Ballpark” fund raising event on Friday, July 22nd at Coca-Cola Field as the Buffalo Bisons (www.bisons.com) take on the Pawtucket Red Sox at 7:35pm. A lucky HOME member will be selected to make the first pitch of the game! The HOME team [attendees at this event] will all be seated together for added camaraderie.

It’s sure to be a wonderful evening of great baseball and a fantastic post game fireworks show! Cherish the memories you will make at this HOME family fun event!

Tickets are $30 for adults and $25 for children age 12 and under. This includes a hot dog, soft drink and two chances to win a Buffalo Bison’s Gift Pack. Guests will receive an additional 25% discount in the Bisons souvenir store on the day of the game. All proceeds from the evening will help HOME continue to provide exceptional fair housing services to the people of WNY.

For more information, call HOME at 716.854.1400 or check the events page online at www.homeny.org where payment can now be made by PayPal. Photos of the event will be posted on FaceBook, so make sure to “like” HOME!