Housing Opportunities Made Equal was very proud to sponsor the Membership Networking Event on Thursday, October 15 at 6pm. The master of ceremonies for the evening was Kenji Kimura, a new member to HOME. With testimonials given by many HOME members on the benefits of membership, the program culminated in the good feeling that everyone had for the wonderful work HOME continues to do on a daily basis.

Special “Thank You” goes to everyone who had made this very successful event possible, especially Canisius College for donating the venue. Also, without the members of HOME we would not be able to produce such a wonderful event. Thank you!

M.C. Kenji Kimura guided members to speak about their experiences with HOME.

Staff, Board members and HOME members all enjoyed the event.

The Membership Event was an opportunity to connect with friends and colleagues.

Young and young at heart can appreciate all that HOME does for the community.

Dedicated HOME members Chris Kregg and Helen Stormer share a moment at the event.

Thank you to all our patrons...
Racial Bias
Case Resolved

Kimberly Peterman, a single White mother of a bi-racial child, searched for housing. She read an ad in Lockport Union Sun & Journal and called landlord Jeremy Kress to inquire about the unit. Kress showed her the unit and she signed a six-month lease. That same day, she moved into the unit with the help of her child’s father, who is African-American.

According to the federal complaint, two days later, Kress confronted her saying: “You have a Black boyfriend?” Peterman informed Kress that he was her daughter’s father. Kress responded: “I don’t want Blacks on my property” and “You never told me you had a Black daughter—if I would have known I never would have rented to you.”

Peterman tried to resolve the matter with Kress, but he told her that he wanted her off the property immediately, breaking the lease by forcing her to move out. She called HOME for help.

HOME sent testers. Both testers were allowed to view the unit; however Kress dissuaded the African-American tester by making negative comments about the neighborhood, by saying that he would not do any repairs, and by explaining that he plans on selling the property, according to the federal complaint.

HOME filed a complaint with HUD, which referred it to NYS Division of Human Rights for investigation and adjudication. The parties settled the complaint for $5,500, with no admission of wrongdoing.

HOME Celebrates Groundbreaking at Main and Ferry
By Grace McKenzie

It was a mild, almost balmy, autumn morning. The remaining leaves on trees were radiant gold and orange. It was the perfect October morning for a groundbreaking ceremony outside the long vacant brick building on the corner of Main and Ferry Streets. The Home for HOME project was finally coming to fruition.

For several years HOME dreamt of creating a space that would house not only HOME’s offices, but ten units of energy-efficient barrier free affordable housing. For the first time, HOME would be a landlord.

Now HOME was ready to take the perfect morning to make the announcement of this new beginning and break ground for construction. Dignitaries, concerned community members, HOME friends and staff, 85 people in all, gathered in the forlorn vacant lot behind the building, which held so much potential.

The ceremony began with a warm welcome given by HOME Chair Gilbert R. Hernandez. Architect Charles Gordon explained the project and construction.

Development Committee Chair Philippe Deterville recognized the dignitaries present and explained the project funding. The Home for HOME project would not be possible without the generous contributions from the Margaret L. Wendt Found-

ation, DHCR, City of Buffalo, Federal Home Loan, Mulroy Foundation, M & T Bank Foundation, and individuals (such as HOME past and current Board Directors and HOME members) donating to the Capital Campaign.

Former Buffalo Bill Ernie Warlick spoke of his experiences with discrimination moving to Buffalo in the 1960s and how HOME helped him in those early years.

Delaware District Councilmember, Mike LoCurto, and Masten District Councilmember, Demone Smith, both spoke of the significance of the project to the surrounding neighborhoods. The project provides a gateway between the two districts, aiding neighborhood revitalization efforts and restoring the original beauty of the landmark.

State Senator Antoine Thompson enthusiastically pledged continued financial support of the project.

After the ceremony, Mayor Byron Brown made a recommitment of City funding to the project.

The next step along the path to completion of the project is the simultaneous submission of environmental information to the City of Buffalo and design documents to New York State. These approvals are necessary before HOME can access funding in order to close on the purchase and begin construction.
From the Director: GROUND BROKEN AT MAIN-FERRY

By Scott W. Gehl

In the words of one observer, it was a “splendidly autumnal” day when 85 people crowded into and around a tent pitched on the vacant lot just west of Main & Ferry Streets at 10:30 on 10/30 to witness the groundbreaking for the Home for HOME.

There was animated architect Charlie Gordon explaining the project which he and Bob Conway had designed, heartfelt expressions of support from State Senator Antoine Thompson and Assemblyman Sam Hoyt, and remarks offered from Councilmembers Michael LoCurto and Demone Smith, of the Delaware and Masten Districts. HOME seeks to bridge Buffalo’s historic racial divide at the intersection of their two districts.

But however eloquent the other speakers, none could compare with the off-the-cuff words of Ernie Warlick.

Mr. Warlick was the starting tight end of American Football League’s Buffalo Bills, who helped propel the team to back-to-back AFL championships in 1964 & 1965. It was this larger-than-life figure that a young John Hurley had met when he summoned the courage to approach the door of an Eggertsville house, asking Mr. Warlick to autograph a promotional photo from Tops Markets.

Twenty-five years later as newly elected chair of the board of HOME, John read in James Hecht’s book because it is Right that football stardom had not been enough to shield Mr. & Mrs. Warlick from the sting of racial discrimination. It was courageous HOME volunteers who had helped the Warlicks win the right to purchase that modest Eggertsville house.

Looking a decade or more younger than his 77 years, Ernie Warlick told a football story or two and then returned to that time when he and his wife had met housing discrimination and HOME had been there to help. Mr. Warlick’s voice broke when he explained it was years afterwards he had learned that even after his family had moved in, HOME members continued to drive by the house after dark “just to make sure we were all right. I couldn’t believe people would care that much.”

Mr. Warlick added he was reassured that, so many years later, HOME still cared.

Alum makes good

In the audience was a slightly older John Hurley, who had joined HOME when a young associate at Phillips Lytle and went on to serve as Chair from 1988-90. John led HOME during the tumultuous 1988-89 campaign to enact a Buffalo Fair Housing Ordinance and was one of three representatives to make a futile argument to a former mayor—before a crowd of frightened and angry senior citizens—about why the civil rights law passed by the Common Council should not be vetoed, as it inevitably was. That unforgettable day the atmosphere was electric with fear and hate.

Recipient of the James Crawford Award for Outstanding Service to HOME, John stayed involved with fair housing through his years as a partner at Phillips and as executive vice president and general counsel of Canisius College. Having raised millions for his alma mater, John has been a valued advisor to HOME’s first Capital Campaign.

On October 20, John J. Hurley was named the first lay president of Canisius College.

Exclusion in exclusive OP

While the final chapters have yet to be written, on October 21 The Buffalo News published: a front-page story by Mary Pasciak about actions by the Town of Orchard Park to block a 43-unit affordable housing development for senior citizens sponsored by People Inc. and funded by HUD. When news of HOME’s investigation reached town officials, Councilmember Nan Ackerman commented: “An organization whose espoused mission in life is to find racial bias wants to find it, so it can justify its own existence.”

In an ironic turn of events, the very day the article appeared a conference entitled “Affordable Housing—Perception vs. Reality” was scheduled for ECC’s south campus—in Orchard Park.

With the exception of a few members of the Erie County Fair Housing Partnership, the audience was a sea of white faces, most of whom were appointees to municipal planning and zoning boards seeking annual training credits. Following a presentation by HOME’s Grace McKenzie on the life-limiting effects of racial segregation and concentrated poverty, an unidentified audience member said he had another solution for concentrated Black poverty: “Sterilization.”

Please Renew Your Membership or Give the Gift of Membership in HOME. Thank You!

Prefix: _______ Professional Title: _______

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Address: ____________________________________________

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Phone: _____________________________________________

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May we list your name in Insight as a HOME supporter?

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Special Corporate/Business memberships are available. Visit www.homeny.org for details.

Contributions to HOME are Tax-Deductible.

For more information contact Shannon Koehn at 854-1400.
Sally is a Greater Opportunities (GO!) Program client who entered into the program in December 2008. At that time, Sally was facing a set of various challenges and barriers that were preventing her from leading her life to the fullest.

Social Worker Nicole Thorn was able to work with Sally and her food stamp case worker to secure a larger monthly amount of food stamps for Sally. Nicole also worked with Sally and her Section 8 provider to stabilize her Section 8 situation.

Through linkages provided by the GO! Program, Sally was able to attend computer training classes through Goodwill Industries and receive employment services.

Sally stated she likes the fact that HOME is always there for her, and lets her make her own choices. During a recent home visit, Sally reported that for the first time in a long time, she feels like “she’s going in the right direction” and like her life “is worth something.”

She also thanked Nicole for “getting things done” and “always being on it.”

Maria is a Community Housing Center (CHC) client who lived on the West Side of Buffalo. She is 50 years-old and lives alone.

During a one-on-one session with Mobility Counselor Melissa Sommerville, Maria disclosed that she had recently viewed an apartment in South Buffalo and was discriminated against because she was Hispanic. Although himself Hispanic, the landlord told her that he knew what “Hispanics on the West Side did and he didn’t want any drugs or violence to be going on in his apartment.” Maria was crying and very upset as she explained this. She stated that she was more hurt because someone from her own background was discriminating against her. Maria did not want to file a discrimination case out of fear.

As Melissa worked with Maria during her housing search, Maria would talk about the crime and violence going on in her neighborhood and how badly she needed to get out of there. After 1 ½ months of working with the CHC program, Maria was able to find an apartment in South Buffalo, near her daughter and grandchildren.

Maria stated that the CHC program has been a blessing and she cannot express how much HOME’s help has meant to her.

For more stories, visit www.homeny.org.

**Leave A Legacy ...** Housing Opportunities Made Equal exists because of the continuing support of our members who desire to live in a community free of discrimination. For all those who share this belief, there is another way to support HOME’s mission—by Leaving A Legacy to HOME. For information on a making a planned gift to HOME’s John Howland Koekkoek Endowment for Fair Housing Education, contact Shannon Koehn at 854-1400 extension 17.

**Spotlight Story: My Life in Fair Housing** by Jennifer Metzger, Staff Attorney

I will never forget August 2003, a time that dramatically changed my life. I headed to Cleveland, Ohio to start my first year as a law student, and it was going to be my first time away from home. Being no more than the ripe age of 22, I remember thinking that it was great to get out of Buffalo, and I was going to be this famous, wealthy attorney. I had no idea what was in store.

I finished my first year of law school and decided to get ahead on some credit hours. The summer of 2004, I signed up for Fair Housing Law Clinic, in conjunction with a Cleveland fair housing agency called Housing Advocates, Inc. I familiarized myself with fair housing laws and gained invaluable experience. While interviewing prospective clients to get the facts of the case, I realized the impact of housing discrimination and how it can truly effect all aspects of a person’s life. With everything being in hindsight, just thinking that I was signing up for some extra credit hours, I was actually heading down a path dedicated to helping the community become a better place.

Flash forward to May 2006, graduation. I did not have a job lined up at a large law firm, earning that 6 figure salary I originally planned on. Rather, I was preparing myself to head back “home.” Yes, I had made a very conscious decision to move back to Western New York and to be honest, I was very excited! Knowing that I wanted to work in the area of housing discrimination and to get involved in this community, I went online and searched for organizations and came across HOME’s website. At this time, I contacted HOME to volunteer so that I could make a difference in people’s lives.

I am thrilled to be now working with HOME in an area of law I am passionate about. Not only does HOME help fight discrimination, HOME makes our community better and creates opportunity for those in need, so that they may find their way “home.”
A “Rapid” Solution to Homelessness

By Kenneth Gholston

Included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act was $1.5 billion dollars nationwide for a Homeless Prevention Fund to pay for homeless prevention and re-housing. After an extensive application and planning process, HOME, and eight other local agencies have created and implemented a Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program for residents of the City of Buffalo. The purpose of the program is to provide homelessness prevention assistance to households who would otherwise become homeless, and to provide assistance to rapidly re-house persons who are already homeless.

According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, because of the current recession 1.5 million additional Americans might experience homelessness in 2009 and 2010 without effective intervention. This is due to the fact that those households that are already at risk for homelessness are the first—and the hardest hit—by downturns in the economy.

Homelessness is a serious problem in Western New York as well. According to the 2008 Buffalo and Erie County Homelessness Profile prepared by the Homeless Alliance of Western New York, there were 2,902 homeless clients seeking assistance, almost 20% of whom were children with families. And while this program will not be able to end homelessness in this area, it will help to provide stable and affordable housing for those who are homeless or in danger of becoming homeless because of the downturn in the nation’s economy.

All clients who enter into the HPRP program will be assigned a caseworker and will undergo a benefit analysis to determine if they are eligible for financial assistance. If a client is in danger of becoming homeless because of rent that is in arrears, assistance to pay that back rent will be available.

HOME has been charged with the task of quickly finding housing for people who have become homeless. Using the similar skill-set that staff has acquired working with Section 8 participants in our Mobility Program, HOME staff will work with clients individually and work with them to identify safe and affordable housing. To expedite the home finding process, HOME staff will be out in the community, armed with a cell phone and laptop to contact landlords and clients when necessary.

In addition to working with clients to find housing, HOME will construct a landlord database of available units that can be distributed to clients who need to find housing. And for landlords who participate in the program, there may be financial assistance available depending on clients’ financial situation.

On an individual level, the HPRP relocation program hopes to find housing for at least two families a week for the next year. But the goals of the program are larger than that. Quality, stable housing is paramount to the health and well-being of children and families from all walks of life. With so many families facing hard times both here and nationwide, the HPRP program is necessary to make sure that eligible families get the assistance they need and don’t have to worry about whether or not they have a roof over their head at night.

Changes in the CHC Program

By Kenneth Gholston

HOME is pleased to announce that John R. Oishei Foundation has provided a second year of support to operate the Greater Buffalo Community Housing Center’s Mobility Program. With a second year of funding there are some changes to the program:

Limited Space

Because CHC Staff will also work on the Homelessness Prevention and Relocation Program, there will be fewer Small Group Sessions per month, and also a limit to how many people will be scheduled for each session. Despite the smaller client capacity, clients will still receive the same quality service-individual assistance in finding quality, affordable housing in non-poverty impacted areas. If clients choose to move into an opportunity area, they will be eligible for up to $500 in assistance towards their security deposit.

More Contact

There will be changes to the CHC’s Case Management Program (aka the GO! Program). It was determined that the best characteristic of the program was to be in constant contact with clients. By contacting clients every other week, HOME’s social worker can better identify and immediately address any issue that may be preventing a GO! Program client from moving toward self-sufficiency. The GO! Program is a vital part of the CHC because it helps clients to access all of the advantages of moving to a low poverty area and helps clients move toward self-sufficiency. The CHC will continue to partner with the Education Opportunity Center; Creating Assets, Savings and Hope (CASH) Coalition; and Goodwill to assist clients to meet their goals. In addition to those partners, HOME has joined with Belmont Shelter Corporation to encourage clients to open Individual Development Accounts. IDAs are matched savings accounts that enable families to save. IDAs reward the monthly savings of families who are building towards purchasing an asset - most commonly buying their first home.

The CHC would like to sincerely thank the Oishei Foundation for its continued and generous support of a truly worthwhile program.
HOME raises 75% of it’s Capital Campaign Goal

The cost for the Home for HOME mixed-use project at the corners of Main and W. Ferry Streets is $2.7 million. HOME has secured $2.2 million to cover construction of the ten units of affordable, energy-efficient, barrier-free housing through grant support from the New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal, the Federal Home Loan Bank of New York and the City of Buffalo HOME Program.

The remaining $500,000 is necessary for HOME’s offices. Since August 2008, HOME has set about sharing the opportunity to support this wonderful project by making a multi-year pledge.

We are happy to report at this time that we are 75 percent of the way to the campaign goal of $500,000. The lead gift for HOME’s capital campaign was $95,000 from the Margaret L. Wendt Foundation, followed by $50,000 from the Mulroy Family Foundation, $30,000 from M&T Bank Foundation, $20,000 from the Community Foundation of Greater Buffalo, $15,000 from the Western New York Foundation.

HOME’s current and past board of directors along with HOME members and gracious supporters have also contributed in a big way. Individual gifts range from $10—$25,000 (over a five-year pledge period).

We thank those who have already contributed and continue to proceed to our ambitious goal. At this point we welcome your support. If you are interested in scheduling a meeting to discuss this wonderful opportunity contact HOME’s Director of Development Shannon M. Koehn @ 854.1400 ext. 17 or skoehn@homeny.org.

Give the Gift of Fair Housing Support HOME Today!

Looking for that perfect gift this holiday season? Well look no more. HOME has several opportunities for you to give the gift of fair housing. While many of HOME’s services are funded through generous grant support, others are subsidized by HOME’s fundraising efforts. Here are just three of the ways you, your friends, family and colleagues can choose to make a difference by supporting HOME:

Give the Gift of Membership/ Become a member yourself:

HOME members are a diverse group of conscientious people dedicated to living and creating a community free from housing discrimination and rich in diversity. Members support not only through their generous payment of their annual dues but by getting involved with the work of HOME. Membership levels range from $10—$500. HOME membership gift certificates are available at any time throughout the year.

Support HOME’s Annual Fund

Perhaps you opt not to become a full-fledged member of HOME but do wish to contribute. Here is your opportunity. Once a year HOME makes appeals to members of our community to which our HOME members refer us. Consider donating to HOME’s annual fund or requesting information to share with someone that you think may be interested in giving to HOME as a one-time gift.

Take the Corporate Challenge

Whether you are an international bank or a local business you can become a corporate member of HOME. Support gained through our corporate challenge goes directly to HOME’s core services. Corporate support is recognized at HOME’s annual dinner and throughout the year in various publications. Giving levels range from $500—$7,500.

For more information on any of these opportunities visit: www.homeny.org/donate_now or contact Shannon Koehn 854.1400 ext. 17