When reading through advertisements of housing for rent, one might think that it is easy to get housing if you are a student. Many ads will blatantly state “great for students,” “perfect for one,” or “students only.” The opportunities abound, if you are a student, or so one might think. However, if you deeply inspect what is really going on, it might just surprise.

A quaint little ranch house, with three bedrooms, on a country lane lists for $1,000.00 per month. Upon closer consideration, college students were quoted $300.00 per student with four students living in the house. This obviously adds up to two hundred dollars a month more than the initially requested price.

Some landlords say that they do this practice because college students “tear up the place.” This is a common stereotype of college students.

A nice house with a yard in the University District places an ad for “students only” to rent for $675 for three students or $800 for four students, as there is a room that may be converted from an office into a fourth bedroom. Converting a room into a bedroom is not legal unless the room has at least one outlet and overhead lighting. This is an insidious practice that is all too common, cheating students out of money while the students believe that they are getting a price.
From the Director: COLLABORATING WITH THE BEST

By Scott W. Gehl

Child & Family Services—which traces its origins to the founding of the Children’s Aid Society in 1873—is today one of the largest not-for-profit family service agencies in the nation, and recognized as a national leader in innovative programming and services. One of its flagship programs is Haven House.

Haven House provides crisis intervention and shelter for victims of domestic violence. Although it has developed a system of transitional housing for families after they leave the shelter, tenancy is time-limited. HOME and Child & Family Services have now proposed a collaboration to the NYS Homeless Housing Assistance Program which will allow families to move into housing without any time limits.

Under the proposal, HOME would market and manage the housing and provide tenant training and referrals. Haven House would provide on-going counseling and support services including parenting education, economic self-sufficiency mentoring and legal and advocacy.

For nearly three decades HOME and Child & Family Services have collaborated on a range of legislative issues—most recently the imperative to amend or eliminate Buffalo’s discriminatory Restricted Use Permit Ordinance. This proposal represents our first programmatic collaboration. HOME could not have a better partner.

Losses from the board

This past April, HOME members elected Michael L. DeVinney to the Board of Directors.

HOME had first met Mike DeVinney when he attended a 2004 public hearing gathering data for an Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing study being conducted by HOME for the City of Niagara Falls. On that cold November night at the Doris Jones Community Center, Mike spoke forcefully about issues affecting persons with disabilities in Niagara County.

By the time Mike DeVinney joined the HOME Board, he had become the director of the Niagara County Center for Independent Living. After an orientation session in May, Mike attended his first board meeting on June 7th; his comments that night revealed only a hint of the expertise gained during decades as a disability rights advocate.

Twelve days later, Mike DeVinney passed away quite unexpectedly. Our condolences go to his life partner, Kathleen Pautler, and his family.

In mid-July HOME received the unwelcome resignation of Linda R. Hassberg, who has accepted a position with the highly regarded Empire Justice Center doing public interest law on Long Island.

While on staff at the Western New York Law Center, Linda had worked with Kathleen Lynch and Joe Kelemen representing HOME in cases which ended 40 years of publicly assisted discrimination at Marine Drive. Since joining our board, Linda involved herself in a wide range of issues—from planning, to membership, to board development. We wish Linda continued success.

YOU ARE THE FUTURE OF CIVIL RIGHTS!

Become a HOME member today!

- Student/limited income .......... $10
- Individual membership .......... $30
- Family membership .......... $40
- Contributing membership .......... $50
- Advocate .......... $100
- Friend .......... $200
- Patron .......... $500
- Other .......... $_______

Your Name_______________________________________
Your Address_____________________________________
City____________________ State_______ Zip___________
Phone__________________email____________________

Ask about our organization and corporate membership packages!
For more information: 854-1400 ext. 17 or www.homeny.org

I WANT TO LEAVE A LEGACY OF CIVIL RIGHTS SUPPORT

- I’ve include HOME in my estate plan
- Please send information on how I can include HOME in my estate plan

Detach and return to:
HOME, Inc
700 Main Street
Buffalo NY 14201
Housing Opportunities Made Equal suggests that students, as well as all home seekers, look for fair landlords that will be respectful of tenant’s rights. Finding housing in a community of opportunity where there are resources available to enjoy is paramount. Finding housing that suits one’s needs rather than looking only at the rent per person per bedroom is important as well. Students should consider all options while looking for housing. When students encounter inequitable quotes for rent, examine the situation and discuss the rate increases with the landlord before signing a lease or agreeing to pay an exorbitant amount. By all means, if you are a college student, be it traditional or non-traditional, make an educated decision on where to live and what rent is fair to accept in the Western New York housing market.

Laqueita had never lived anywhere outside of her family’s home. She had a low income and was not able to afford to move, until she received her Section 8 voucher. All of a sudden the world opened up for her.

“It was exciting,” Laquetia stated about her move from the city of Buffalo to the Cheektowaga/West Seneca area. Together with her son, she was able to forge a new life because of Section 8 and the GBCHC’s grant program.

Laqueita received a $250 grant to help pay her security deposit after leasing housing in an area of opportunity. When explaining how it felt to be in the program, she said, “I did not realize what the cost of living is. That money was really helpful. It would be great for anybody. It was very much helpful.”
The Greater Buffalo Community Housing Center: Making a Difference for People in Western New York

By Kenneth Gholston

(Continued from Page 1)

The consent decree called for the allocation of an additional 1,600 Section 8 subsidies which would give low-income minority residents the ability to lease private housing anywhere in the area. However, because studies showed that most minorities who receive a Section 8 voucher tend to rent in areas similar to their own (areas which are usually high in poverty), a provision was added to create a program which would assist families in making a free and informed choice in deciding where to live and to remove some of the barriers which these families may face in their housing search.

This program would work with families, providing them with one-on-one counseling, information and support throughout the entirety of their housing search.

In 1998, after two rounds of requests for proposals, HOME and the Buffalo Federation of Neighborhood Centers were selected to run this new program, which would be called the Greater Buffalo Community Housing Center. While the goals of the GBCHC were consistent with the mission of HOME, there was still some heavy lifting to be done—literally. Because the GBCHC would provide new staff positions, the offices at HOME were expanded to 3,100 square feet, to accommodate additional staff and clients. The new HOME office space was put to good use, as HOME saw a dramatic increase in the number of clients that were served by the agency. In 1998 (the year before the GBCHC became operational), HOME provided services to about 240 clients each month. During the month of April 1999, HOME served 879 clients, which was an increase of an astounding 366 percent.

Those new GBCHC clients were provided with individual counseling, access to important information about every municipality in Erie County through the Mobility Library, and even transportation to see apartments if needed through escorted searches, where the counselor would pick up the client and take him or her to see numerous apartments at one time. Clients were also assisted financially as well. Reimbursements were offered for child care costs associated with the housing search as well as for application fees. Most significantly, assistance was offered through HOME’s partner BFNC for security deposit and moving expenses. If the clients qualified for the assistance they were given $500 in the form of a loan to go toward the cost of the security deposit, and $200 toward the cost of moving expenses. Through the first five years of the program (1999-2004) the GBCHC assisted 1,524 clients with security deposits and 1,155 with moving assistance payments. Though this time period the GBCHC was run under the capable stewardship of Assistant Director of Mobility Services, David A. Wright, and a slew of talented and committed mobility counselors including: Kellie Nickerson, John Funderburg III, Lovell Pompey, DeAnna Eason, Lisa Maria Cruz, Kenneth Gholston and Stacy Brownell.

While the core of the program remained the same, the way the program was administered was tinkered with slightly. The original consent decree called for only those clients who were still on waiting lists from Belmont and Rental Assistance Corporation to receive vouchers. Eventually, all Section 8 recipients who were living in high poverty areas were eligible for GBCHC services. The security deposit was also changed from a loan to a grant in 2002. This grant they do not have to pay back.

While some programmatic changes occurred in the first five years of the program, more drastic changes were on the way due to funding problems. BFNC withdrew, and HOME sought to take up all aspects of the GBCHC. The big blow came when it was discovered that the City of Buffalo failed to comply with the consent decree by not paying their share of the funds designated to operate the GBCHC. This lack of funding took its toll on the program, as a staff of was whittled down to two and eventually to one lone staff.

With a new contract with the City of Buffalo, the GBCHC was given renewed life in 2005. The program now offers many of the same benefits as the original program, and offers $250 toward the cost of a security deposit for any Section 8 voucher holder who chooses to move from high poverty areas to areas of opportunity.

Since its inception in 1999 the Greater Buffalo Community Housing Center has assisted over 2,400 families to find housing in the areas of their choice. Although smaller in scale since those heady days of 1999, the purpose of the program remains the same—to assist families to find housing where their hearts desire and their means permit.
“Together We Can Make A Difference”
Membership Event, October 11, 2007

By Shannon M. Koehn

Housing Opportunities Made Equal exists because of the continuing support of you, our members, who desire to live in a community free of discrimination. Membership is truly our strength! We invite you to join us as we celebrate you — The Heartbeat of HOME — on Thursday, October 11th, from 5:30 to 7:30 pm at Canisius College’s Grupp Fireside Lounge located in the Student Union on Hughes Street. We have planned a FREE Membership Appreciation/Networking event to simply say — Thank You!

The theme, “Together We Can Make a Difference” rings true for the difference you as members have made in the communities of Western New York over the years; and it speaks to the impact that we will continue to make as we become the fight for the new face of civil rights. It’s only when we fight a good fight together that we champion our cause of fair housing and equal treatment for all.

The event is open to the public. It will allow you to catch up with old friends, perhaps network with new friends, enjoy food, refreshment and the opportunity to learn all the new and exciting goings-on at HOME!

As a primary feature of the event we are selling raffle tickets ($5 each or 5 tickets for $20) to win a one-night’s accommodation and a four-course gourmet dinner for two at the William Seward Inn (www.williamsewardinn.com), an exquisite bed & breakfast in Westfield, minutes away from the Chautauqua Institution. Raffle tickets are still available by calling 716.854.1400 or plan to participate in the raffle the evening of October 11th! Other donated prizes will be raffled and announced with the Grand Prize winner during the event.

It is sure to be a great time, so invite your friends and colleagues and don’t forget your business cards to network!

HOME wishes to thank members People, Inc. for sponsoring the catering for the event, Jim & Debbie Dahlberg for the donation of the deluxe overnight and dinner accommodations, and John Hurley, Esq. & Rita Capezzi, Ph.D. of Canisius College for the donation of the venue.

For more information or to RSVP please e-mail Shannon Koehn at skoehn@homeny.org or call 716.854.1400 ext. 17.

Leave A Legacy ...

As a child I learned what it was like to feel different in a negative way because of my color. Growing up in a household of different colors was a blessing, only I didn’t know it yet. Early I learned that the definition for beauty was being Caucasian, blonde and blue-eyed, which was a description I could never live up to being. Puerto Ricans come in all shades. My mother and father were of the same national origin but different colors.

An outstanding experience occurred when I was 17 years old. I got a job in a library very far from where I lived. It was the only thing available, and I took the job in Coney Island at Home Crest Library. I realized I was the only one with brown skin, and I was treated differently. I was isolated. The women knew each other; they socialized with each other. I remember feeling intimidated because I was the only minority. I knew I was not welcomed there, and I hated going to work. One morning as I arrived at work, I was told that my boss wanted to see me in the office. I walked there, afraid of what was to come. As I had anticipated, my boss told me I was fired. My boss got up from her desk and pulled my hands out of my pockets. I remember standing there humiliated and confused. My boss never gave me a real reason, but I knew better. I remember all the thoughts and feelings as I walked away. I carried the shame and anger of the way I was treated. Later I realized it was not mine to carry. It did not belong to me. I did nothing wrong. I certainly had my own journey and healing ahead of me. I know my experiences have made me a better, stronger, and a more compassionate human being who truly cares for the next person in a positive way. I have traveled mountains, rivers, and valleys to get to where I am today, and I continue to learn truly valuable lessons.

Spotlight Story of the Month: Miriam Gonzalez, Senior Counselor of HOME

I remember feeling intimidated because I was the only minority.
The Newest Face of Civil Rights

SHANNON & A HUG.

PERMIT NO. 427

The Puerto Rican Day Parade:

A Glance

+ At A Glance

MEMBERSHIP IS OUR STRENGTH!

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR PATRONS...