



Eliminating discrimination through *Enforcement, Education & Advocacy*

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SPEAKS OUT



Executive Director **Robert J. Brothers, Jr.** seemed optimistic about the future of the Agency. "This has been a very challenging year but we have the opportunity for a new beginning." We started the year at 21 Grand Street—in a building under construction and ended the year with a new Central office address of 25 Sigourney Street in Hartford. The fiscal year began with the Director having goals of "expediting the processing time for investigations, improving the image of the agency, strengthening and clarifying civil rights law, and encouraging business growth and development through contract compliance." The Director believes the agency is moving in the direction of attaining these goals--"investigative staff has been provided with training tools to assist them with expediting case processing, a comprehensive legislative package has been developed, staff has tirelessly travelled to various cities in the state conducting informational sessions on discrimination and staff has conducted Contract Compliance Fairs throughout the state. We want to eliminate discrimination through enforcement, education and advocacy and we are partnering with legislative commissions and community groups to do just that."

The Central Office of the CHRO is now located at 25 Sigourney Street, 7th fl., Hartford, CT 06106.

IN THE COMMUNITY YIR



In this past year, CHRO informational sessions have been held throughout the state of Connecticut to inform the public about the CHRO complaint and public hearing processes and to eliminate discrimination throughout the state. The year began with a police/community forum co-sponsored by the CHRO and the AAAC entitled "Avoiding Discrimination in the Provision of Police Services." The final informational session for the year was held in Bridgeport at the Burroughs-Saden Library. **CHRO Commissioner Cheryl L. Clarke** welcomed the public to the event that drew a diverse group of individuals from the community including private attorneys, the Bridgeport Housing Authority, **Theresa Younger**, Director of the PCSW, **Bill Howe** from the State Dept. of Education and many others. The session featured an improvisational skit in

Spanish and English on housing discrimination. Private attorney **Eric Diaz** and HRO Representative **Ivan Carrasquillo** were the actors.



CHRO Attorneys **Michelle Keuler, Alix Simonetti, Kim Jacobsen, Robin Fox, Cheryl Sharp and Robert Zamlowski** and South West Regional Manager **Tanya Hughes** were joined by Hearing Referees **Thomas Austin and J. Allen Kerr** and private attorneys **Cynthia Jennings, Mike Simko and Mary Kelly** at the informational session. HRO Representatives **Ivan Carrasquillo and Dan Salerno** and CHRO Assistant Commission Counsel **Carolyn Anderson** participated in the event as well.



An audience participant thanked the CHRO for providing the Bridgeport community with information about discrimination in employment. The events have been co-sponsored by **AAAC, LPRAC, APAAC, PCSW and the NAACP**. The legal department is gearing up for another year of community outreach and graciously looks forward to working with the CHRO Regional Offices, the community and private attorneys to sponsor these sessions. A special thanks to all of the

CHRO staff who have participated in these public informational sessions in 2010.

LEGAL UPDATE



The legal department at the CHRO is composed of seven Human Rights Attorney 3s **Alix Simonetti, Margaret Nurse Goodison, Cheryl Sharp, David Kent, Robin Kinsler Fox, Kim Jacobsen and Michelle Dumas Keuler** and one Principal Attorney, **Charles Krich** and collectively the department has well over a hundred years of experience in civil rights law enforcement. The Department also benefits from the expertise of paralegal **Charles Perry** and Secretary **Margaret Peters**. This past year, the department was responsible for prosecuting cases at public hearing and in the superior and appellate courts, providing training to the state, private employers and the general public, launching an education and outreach initiative and creating and editing **CHROTimes**. The department has cause to celebrate the past year as the CHRO received favorable rulings in many cases prosecuted by the Department.



CHRO Attorney Robin Fox settled a public accommodations case where an individual who uses a service animal for a mobility impairment had been denied access to a mini-mart attached to a gas station. The parties settled for

a cash settlement, training and an agreement to post signs indicating that service animals were welcome.

CHRO Attorney Cheryl Sharp was featured in the Connecticut Law Tribune as one of the “dozen who made a difference in 2010”, for her work on informational sessions designed to inform the public about civil rights law. The full article appears at www.ctlawtribune.com

The CHRO has been added as a member of the CT Safe Schools Coalition, which works on preventing bullying in schools. **CHRO Attorneys Robin Fox, Cheryl Sharp and Alix Simonetti** represent the CHRO on this coalition.

CHRO Attorney Michelle Dumas Keuler received the largest civil penalty awarded in a case prosecuted by the CHRO in Palmer v. Shillingford Realty. There are four Defendants, and each defendant was ordered to pay a \$10,000 civil penalty to the state to vindicate the public's interest.

REGIONAL SPOTLIGHT

The CHRO has four Regional Offices where complaint investigations are done. There are between six and eight investigators assigned to each Regional Office and One Regional Manager. The Regional Managers are **Epi Carrasquillo**, Hartford; **Tanya Hughes**, Bridgeport, **Jim Flynn**, Norwich, and **Pekah Wallace**, Waterbury.

CAPITOL REGION

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WEST CENTRAL

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FAIR HOUSING

In recent years the Housing Unit of the CHRO has seen its staff dwindle but its statutory mandates have remained the same. The current staff is composed of a Supervisor and Human Rights Attorney **Robert Zamlowski** and three investigators, **Cira Roman, Dori Bruce and Diane Carter**. One of the most compelling cases this year was the story of a little boy who needed a service animal to accommodate his disability and the housing unit was able to negotiate a settlement in the matter which allowed the boy to keep his service animal in his home.

CONTRACT COMPLIANCE



On, December 16, 2010, the Affirmative Action/ Contract Compliance Unit held its

Contract Compliance Fair at the Bridgeport Public Library. The purpose of the Fair was to provide information/insight into the Contract Compliance process for contractors and vendors doing business with the state. There was also a panel discussion with CHRO's HRO Representatives. – **Jeri D. Beckford**, **Janice L. Cheeks**, and **Susan Hom**. Due to Fairs' popularity additional fairs will be scheduled in the near future around the state. The next **Contract Compliance Fair** will be held on **Tuesday, February 8, 2011** at 61 Woodland Street in Hartford @ the **DDS Training Room B-31**.

ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES Y1R

Employment cases settled during the Investigative stage

December \$351,500

Housing cases settled during the investigative stage

December \$17,600

(The fiscal year for the CHRO runs from July 2010 through June 2011)

Year In Review

July 2010 – Dec. 2010 Employment and Housing cases settled during investigation

\$1,746,225.09

OFFICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS



On December 1, 2010, OPH had sixty-nine pending contested cases.

For the fiscal year to date, the referees have conducted seventy-nine conferences, four default hearings, and four public hearings that totaled thirteen trial days. For the fiscal year

to date, the referees have ruled on one hundred and seventy-five motions.

Awards

The total amount awarded via stipulated agreement for discrimination cases this month is **\$23,500.00**. The total settlement figure for discrimination cases for the fiscal year to date is **\$70,000.00**. These settlement figures do not include the dollar amounts for settlements in confidential agreements nor does it include the dollar amounts in whistleblower agreements.

The total amount awarded via final decision for discrimination cases this month and for this fiscal year is **\$5,000.00**.

The total amount awarded in whistleblower cases \$177,917. Twenty-five discrimination cases and 9 whistleblower cases have been closed.

COMMUNITY ACTIVITY 2010

CHRO Attorneys and Investigators also participated in community events throughout the state to raise the awareness of the public regarding discrimination in housing, employment, credit and places of public accommodation such as **Stand Down** for Connecticut Veterans, training at CRT, the City of New Britain's "**Abilities Conference**", the 2010 **National Fair Housing Policy Conference**, the Neighborhood Block Party and Wellness Festival, Career Days, the annual **CT Business Expo**, and the Concerned Citizens' Forum.

COMMISSIONER'S CORNER

The Commission is overseen by nine

volunteer Commissioners who are appointed by the governor and the legislature. In this past year, CHRO Commissioners **Dawn Niles** Sr. Legislative Assistant; **Edith Pestana** Administrator of the Environmental Justice Program at the state Department of Environmental Protection; **Cheryl Clarke** Manager of Purchasing and Supplier Diversity at Northeast Utilities; **Ed Mambruno** Independent Ombudsperson for the CT Department of Developmental Services; and **Rev. Shelly Best** President and CEO of the Conference of Churches in Hartford, have all shared their stories with "CHROTimes" and we look forward to hearing from Commissioners **Andrew Norton**, **Patricia Wrice** and **Alexia Cruz** in 2011.

UPCOMING EVENTS



The CHRO will be Co-sponsoring the **Connecticut Kids' Court Competition and Kids Speak** in March/April. The purpose of Kids' Court is to raise the social consciousness of youth regarding civil and human rights issues and to **reduce bullying and harassment** that is largely based on a young persons membership in a protected class. Stay Tuned for more information.



HAPPY NEW YEAR