



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

DATE: December 18, 2008

CONTACT: Margaret Bowitz, Director of Case Management and Training  
Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council

PHONE: 414-278-1240

### **LANDLORDS DENIED HOUSING TO SINGLE MOM WITH TWO KIDS: HOUSING DISCRIMINATION COMPLAINT SETTLES**

West Allis, Wisconsin – Kanita Brawley has settled a housing discrimination complaint against the Joseph Peltz Trusts and Crystal Sahr, the owners and manager of rental housing in West Allis. Brawley alleged that co-trustees of the Peltz Trusts and their property manager, Crystal Sahr, had illegally denied her the opportunity to rent an apartment based on the presence of children in her household. Discrimination based on familial status, meaning the presence of minor children in the household, is prohibited by state and federal fair housing law. As part of the settlement, the Peltz Trusts co-trustees, Arnold and Rebecca Peltz, agreed to pay \$18,000 to Brawley. The Peltzes and Sahr also agreed to undergo fair housing training.

Brawley's complaint stemmed from her April 2007 interaction with Sahr. Brawley called Sahr to inquire about an apartment for rent at an 8-unit building on South 115<sup>th</sup> Court in West Allis. Sahr asked Brawley if the apartment was for her, and Brawley replied that it would be for herself and her two daughters. Sahr told her that tenants with children were not accepted.

"I was frustrated, angry and hurt," says Brawley of her experience. "My daughters, who were 10 and 11 at the time, kept questioning why it happened. They thought it was their fault." Brawley contacted the Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council (MMFHC). MMFHC counseled Brawley on her fair housing rights and options for pursuing her complaint. MMFHC also investigated Brawley's allegation using an investigative method known as "testing." During the investigation, Sahr told a tester with children that the landlords "didn't rent to families with kids anymore." In contrast, Sahr provided a tester without children information about the apartment, including the rent and date of availability. Brawley subsequently filed complaints with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Wisconsin Equal Rights Division (ERD). In August 2007, the ERD issued a Charge and Initial Determination finding probable cause to believe that Sahr and the Peltzes violated the Wisconsin Open Housing Law.

In the course of the HUD investigation, Sahr and the Peltzes maintained that they did permit families with children on the first floor, but no children had resided in the property for approximately a year and a half at the time of the HUD investigation. It is illegal under fair housing law to restrict children to certain areas of the building.

Brawley says that when she experienced discrimination, “I knew it was illegal, but I have friends and family members who wouldn’t know that. I hope all people are aware of their rights. Now that the settlement has occurred, I am happy and relieved that [the Peltzes and Sahr] will have to adhere to fair housing laws, and that it will be fair to everyone else who comes through and applies.”

###

MMFHC is a private, non-profit organization whose purpose is to promote fair housing throughout the State of Wisconsin by guaranteeing all people equal access to housing opportunities and by creating and maintaining racially and economically integrated housing patterns. It operates satellite offices in Dane County (the Fair Housing Center of Greater Madison) and in Northeast Wisconsin (the Fair Housing Center of Northeast Wisconsin).

Persons who feel they may have experienced illegal housing discrimination should call 1-877-647-FAIR, a toll-free number. Callers within the 414 area code may call 414-278-1240. All services to victims of illegal housing discrimination are free of charge.