



Discrimination Complaint Settles: Marquette County Landlord Pays \$3,900

April Dreikosen, a single parent, has settled a housing discrimination complaint against Robert Brown. Brown will pay Dreikosen \$3,900 to settle the complaint, and will obtain fair housing training.

Dreikosen rented Brown's three-bedroom single-family home in Westfield from October 2008 until October 2010. In May 2010, Dreikosen and her husband separated and he moved out. She and her young son remained in the home, and that summer Dreikosen let Brown know that although her husband was no longer living there, she wanted to renew the lease for another year. She also told Brown that she was pregnant and due in January 2011. Brown subsequently told Dreikosen that he would not renew the lease because he thought she would be better off living elsewhere and he did not want her living in the house by herself. He told her it was a "two-person" lease. Dreikosen assured Brown that her income was certainly sufficient pay the rent, but he told her his decision was final. Brown later advertised the property with an ad that read, in part, "Owners are looking for a couple who appreciate a quality home at an attractive price."

Dreikosen contacted the Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council (MMFHC) and filed a complaint, alleging that Brown did not renew her lease based on her sex, familial status and marital status. MMFHC counseled her on her legal rights and conducted a testing investigation into her allegations. Testing is a controlled method of measuring and documenting differences in the quality, content and quantity of information and service afforded to different homeseekers by a housing provider. In MMFHC's investigation, Brown told a tester who was a single woman with a child that the current tenant was moving because she was "alone with a four-year-old" and that the home was four miles outside of Westfield, so that "if there is a bad storm at night, [the area] might not get plowed right away the next morning." When a tester who was married with a child spoke to Brown, he did not give her similarly deterring information about the home.

With assistance from MMFHC, Dreikosen filed fair housing complaints against Brown with the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Wisconsin Equal Rights Division (ERD) in March 2011. In July 2011, the ERD issued an initial determination of probable cause to believe that Brown had

refused to renew Dreikosen's lease based on her family status, marital status and sex. In its determination, the ERD cited MMFHC's testing evidence, the expression of preference for a "couple" in Brown's advertisement, and the timing of the non-renewal relative to the departure of Dreikosen's husband.

Dreikosen and Brown reached a settlement through HUD in September 2012, and Brown complied with the financial terms of the settlement in October. In addition to paying damages of \$3,900 to Dreikosen and receiving fair housing training, Brown agreed to advertise all available rentals with non-discriminatory language. He will also use the words "equal housing opportunity" or the HUD fair housing logo in all advertising and on all signs, brochures and other promotional materials.

Following the settlement, Dreikosen stated, "From the very first contact I had with Fair Housing Council, I was led step by step through a process where I could take a proactive role. I no longer felt like a victim with no recourse. The staff of the Fair Housing Council were outstanding in their professionalism and perseverance through what proved a long and difficult case. I am happy with this resolution, and it would have been impossible without Fair Housing Council."