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WEST ALLIS RACE DISCRIMINATION LAWSUIT SETTLES

West Allis, Wisconsin – The Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council (MMFHC) and three individual African American testers have settled a lawsuit against the owner and managers of an apartment building at 11208 West National Avenue in West Allis. The apartment building is owned by James Krahn, one of West Allis's largest residential property owners, and managed by Patrick and Theodora Szydel. Under the settlement terms recently negotiated with the assistance of U.S. Magistrate William Callahan, Krahn has agreed to pay \$110,000 to MMFHC, the African American testers and their attorneys. In addition, Krahn will underwrite the cost of an MMFHC fair housing training seminar for other owners and managers of rental property in West Allis. Further, Krahn will utilize the fair housing logo on his rental materials, display fair housing posters from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in his rental offices, and provide fair housing training to current and future managers of his properties for the next three years.

Over the course of four months in late 2003, MMFHC conducted a testing investigation at Krahn's property. 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. MMFHC used matched pairs of African American and white testers who inquired about housing opportunities at the building. In each of the tests, African American testers were told that no apartments were available, whereas white testers were told of or shown available units. Krahn and his managers also maintained a coded notebook that contained information about the race of different homeseekers who visited the building. Attorney Michael J. Cohn, who represented the individual plaintiffs, noted that "the testing evidence in this case was very strong. The power of this evidence highlights the importance of the Fair Housing Council's testing program in uncovering unlawful housing discrimination."

The lawsuit, filed in U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Wisconsin in June 2005, alleged that Krahn and the Szydels denied rental opportunities to prospective tenants based on their race and color, even though the apartment building had affordable units and is located close to businesses that employ substantial numbers of people of color. According to Attorney Katherine L. Charlton, who represented MMFHC in the lawsuit, "Discrimination unlawfully reduces the quantity of housing available to apartment seekers. We hope the affirmative relief agreed to in the settlement will help educate housing providers and the general public about the

local, state and federal laws that prohibit discrimination in housing on the basis of race among other bases.”

MMFHC Executive Vice President Carla J. Wertheim observed that “the illegal actions of suburban housing providers like Krahn and his employees have kept metropolitan Milwaukee one of the most segregated areas in the U.S. for many decades. Despite popular belief, segregation isn’t just a matter of personal choice or economics. It’s about illegal housing discrimination, plain and simple.”

Attorney Katherine L. Charlton, of Hawks Quindel Ehlke & Perry, is MMFHC’s General Counsel. Attorney Michael J. Cohn, who represented the individual plaintiffs in the case, is with Zetley & Cohn, S.C.

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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.