

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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

**PHONE:** 414-278-1240

### **OSHKOSH RACE DISCRIMINATION CASE RESULTS IN SETTLEMENT**

Oshkosh, Wisconsin – Donna Rich, a white woman with three biracial children, has reached a settlement of a housing discrimination complaint against Oshkosh landlords Arlene Redmann and Orley Nelson.

Rich's complaints stemmed from interactions with Arlene Redmann in April 2005, when Rich inquired about a duplex for rent. Redmann co-owned the duplex, located on West 16<sup>th</sup> Street in Oshkosh, with her husband, Orley Nelson. During a visit to the duplex on April 21, 2005, Rich told Redmann that she had two sons, aged 12 and 16, who lived with her, and a 19-year-old son who visited on weekends. Also during the visit, Redmann told Rich about a previous prospective tenant, to whom she had decided not to rent. Redmann commented on the race and skin color of the other prospective tenant's children, describing them as "black black." Redmann said she had asked herself what the neighbors would think if she were to rent to this woman.

In a phone call the following day, Rich told Redmann that she had biracial children, and that Redmann's remarks about the other prospective tenant's family had made her uncomfortable. Redmann proceeded to ask Rich "how black" Rich's children could be if Rich was white, and whether they were a "little black" or "black black." Redmann told Rich that there was a "family of those" living elsewhere on the street.

Redmann's comments strongly discouraged Rich from pursuing this housing opportunity. "I felt sickened and intimidated by Ms. Redmann's questions about my children's skin color," says Rich. "My sons were in the room when I ended my phone call with Ms. Redmann, and I had to explain to them why I was so upset. I also felt it necessary to ensure that other prospective tenants didn't have the same negative experience." Rich contacted the Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council (MMFHC). MMFHC serves the Fox Valley and Brown County through an Appleton satellite office, the Fair Housing Center of Northeast Wisconsin. MMFHC counseled Rich on her fair housing rights and options for pursuing her complaint. Subsequently, Rich filed complaints with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Wisconsin Equal Rights Division in July 2005, with MMFHC's assistance.

Rich, Redmann and Nelson agreed to a settlement of Rich's HUD complaint that included a payment of \$2,500 made to Rich. Redmann and Nelson also submitted a letter of apology to Rich, agreed to attend a training seminar on fair housing laws, and will use the HUD "Equal Housing Opportunity" logo in advertisements. In addition, HUD may monitor Redmann and Nelson's rental business practices for a period of one year.

“It appalls me that in this day and age, these housing providers were actually asking about how dark a child’s skin color was,” said William R. Tisdale, MMFHC President and CEO. “It shows us that illegal housing discrimination is alive and well in our communities, and that it takes many forms, both subtle and overt.”

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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.