

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

March 18, 2008

CONTACT: Bethany Sanchez,  
Community and Economic Development Program Director  
Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council  
PHONE: 414-278-1240

### **Local Fair Housing Council Leader Wins Prestigious National Award**

Milwaukee, WI – William R. Tisdale, head of the Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council (MMFHC) for over 25 years, has been awarded the National Community Reinvestment Award in recognition of his local, regional and national leadership on fair housing. Tisdale was presented with the honor by the Rev. Jesse Jackson, Sr., at the National Community Reinvestment Coalition's annual conference last week. "To receive this award in 2008, the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the federal Fair Housing Act, is particularly meaningful," said Tisdale. "We've come a long way since 1968, but I'm constantly reminded that we have a great deal of work to do before housing discrimination is eradicated. It just keeps raising its ugly head in ways both familiar and new."

Tisdale was hired as MMFHC's first Housing Counselor in 1978. In order to take that job, he resigned as a police sergeant and took a significant pay decrease. Since then, MMFHC has grown from 5 staff people to a staff of 25, and its budget and influence have increased accordingly. Tisdale's leadership has been characterized by his focused attention on MMFHC's mission, as he has allowed MMFHC to grow in innovative ways that relate to its core mission without ever allowing that mission to be diluted, or for MMFHC resources to be spread too thinly.

MMFHC clients experience high levels of success when seeking a legal remedy to discrimination they've faced. Of the thousands of complainants MMFHC has assisted, approximately 600 have chosen to file lawsuits. Of those 600, MMFHC clients have prevailed in all but 8 cases. Under Tisdale's direction, MMFHC has also developed innovative programs to investigate multiple forms of illegal housing discrimination, combat predatory lending in metropolitan Milwaukee, and increase inclusive, affordable housing opportunities throughout the metropolitan region. In addition, Tisdale has extended fair housing services to other parts of Wisconsin by creating two satellite offices, the Fair Housing Center of Greater Madison and the Fair Housing Center of Northeast Wisconsin.

Since the beginning of his employment with MMFHC, Tisdale has offered his time and expertise to organizations outside of MMFHC, understanding that the fair housing movement has needed leadership on a broad scale. In 1988, Tisdale was the founding president of the National Fair Housing Alliance (NFHA), and was active on NFHA's Board until 2002.

Tisdale has also helped build new fair housing organizations from the ground up. In recognition of the fact that good fair housing services make good fair housing case law, which in turn impacts all fair housing organizations, Tisdale and other MMFHC staff have embarked on two especially ambitious projects: to create fair housing programs at the Legal Aid Society of Hawai'i (2001 to 2004) and at HELP USA in New York City (2005 to 2008). At the time each project was initiated, neither Hawai'i nor New York City had any private fair housing organization available to serve those areas' needs. Both projects were conducted as part of HUD contracts awarded to MMFHC because of its long history of excellence and staff expertise. Today, these fair housing programs continue to thrive and have resulted in thousands of individuals receiving fair housing services who otherwise would not have done so.

###

MMFHC is a private, non-profit organization whose purpose is to promote fair housing throughout the State of Wisconsin by combating illegal housing discrimination 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 414-278-1240, or 1-877-647-FAIR, a toll-free number, if not in the 414 area code. All services to victims of illegal housing discrimination are free of charge.