



Gulf Coast Fair Housing Center

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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News Release

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FAIR HOUSING CENTER WINS CHARGES REGARDING HOUSING DISCRIMINATION AGAINST FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

Biloxi, MS- On October 13th, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced that on October 6, 2010, it issued charges of discrimination against five Mississippi respondents: Deanna Lynn Cooley, Michael Law, Precious Properties LLC, Penny Pincher weekly want ad paper, and Willie Kay Yates. The charges are the result of complaints filed by the Gulf Coast Fair Housing Center (GCFHC) and its client. The charge concludes that each of the respondents engaged in illegal discrimination against families with children in violation of the Federal Fair Housing Act.

GCFHC became aware of a discriminatory ad placed in the Penny Pincher weekly want ad paper in January 2008. A client notified the Center of the presence of an ad for a house in D'Iberville, MS that stated "no children." Over an extended period of time, GCFHC monitored housing ads in the Penny Pincher publication regularly. GCFHC found that Penny Pincher had a practice of publicizing advertisements that included illegal statements that discriminated against families with children. According to its website, Penny Pincher is "South Mississippi's largest free want ad paper and has a weekly distribution of over 40,000 papers." The Fair Housing Act prohibits newspapers and other publications from publishing housing ads that discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, religion, national origin, family status and disability.

GCFHC's investigation included not only the Penny Pincher publication, but also the housing providers who placed the discriminatory ads. In January 2008, results of GCFHC's objective investigation indicated that Ms. Deanna Cooley, a real estate agent licensed by the State of Mississippi, refused to rent a property in D'Iberville to families with children. The property is owned by Ms. Cooley's company, Precious Properties LLC, and Mr. Micheal Law serves as an agent of the company. Both Ms. Cooley and Mr. Law made statements that indicated their refusal to rent to families with children. Additionally, investigators found that a phone number listed in one of the discriminatory ads was assigned to a cell phone owned by Respondent Willie Yates. The Federal Fair Housing Act prohibits landlords and their agents from making discriminatory statements, denying availability or indicating a preference based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability and/or familial status.

After monitoring the Penny Pincher publication and conducting investigations of housing

providers that placed discriminatory ads, GCFHC filed complaints with HUD alleging that the discrimination occurred. The charges issued by HUD indicated that HUD investigators have decided that illegal discrimination did indeed occur. The charges send a clear message that housing discrimination against families with children on the Mississippi Gulf Coast will not be tolerated.

GCFHC's Executive Director Charmel Gaulden comments, "HUD's decision to issue three charges of discrimination recognizes the challenges families with children still face when searching for housing. We applaud this effort to make our community a place where children are welcome."

For more information, visit GCFHC website, www.makeitfair.com

The Gulf Coast Fair Housing Center (GCFHC) is a private non-profit organization. GCFHC was established by a group of concerned Gulf Coast citizens in 2003 with the help of the National Fair Housing Alliance. GCFHC is dedicated to eliminating housing discrimination and furthering equal housing opportunities through education, outreach, advocacy, and enforcement of fair housing laws across the Mississippi Gulf Coast.