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Wednesday, Aug 04, 2004

Local

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Posted on Wed, Aug. 04, 2004

SETTLEMENT

Property owner settles in sex harassment case

Property owner settles in sex harassment case

By TRACY DASH

GULFPORT - A South Mississippi property owner has paid an undisclosed amount of money to a woman who claimed she is the victim of sexual harassment and housing discrimination, according to a press release from the Gulf Coast Fair Housing Center.

The woman, in her late 20s and identified only as Deanna, said she became homeless because she refused to have sex with a man who claimed to be a property manager. The actual property owner, who was not identified, said the man was his maintenance employee.

The maintenance man has been fired as part of the settlement, the release said.

"We will not tolerate housing providers who sexually harass women on the Gulf Coast," said James Perry, Fair Housing Center executive director. "Further, we suspect that other women have been subjected to incidents similar to the alleged sexual harassment in this case. If any women recognize this pattern, they should contact us immediately."

The woman and the maintenance man, who also was not identified, signed a contract in May that allowed the woman to make a partial payment to rent a room in Gulfport and pay the balance two weeks later.

However, the man approached the woman four days later, demanding the full amount. He also threatened to evict her if she didn't have sex with him.

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The woman called the police. Although police told the man the eviction was illegal, he ordered the woman to leave if she didn't have sex with him, the Housing Center said.

The center helped the woman find a place to live and investigated the allegations.

The property owner agreed in July to cooperate with investigators and testify against the maintenance man in future legal proceedings. The maintenance man has not been arrested.



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