

PRESS RELEASE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Midwest Social Justice Leader Named New Executive Director of Open Communities

Experienced Leader in Diversity and Inclusion, David Luna of Highland Park chosen to advance mission for housing, social and economic justice in Chicago's northern suburbs

Winnetka, IL, March 30, 2016 – The Board of Directors of Open Communities, a leading civil rights, housing and social justice advocacy organization in Chicago's northern suburbs, has named David Luna its new Executive Director. Luna, a longtime social justice leader in the Midwest, succeeds Gail Schechter, who has served as Executive Director since 1993. He is committed to advancing Open Communities' mission of a more diverse, inclusive and welcoming environment in the 17 suburban communities that comprise the organization's service area. He will begin serving in the position fulltime on April 25.

"After conducting a thorough search during which we considered over 100 applicants, the members of the board selected David due to his outstanding professional qualifications, his extraordinary passion for justice issues and his experience helping mission-driven organizations turn their visions into reality," said Open Communities' Board President Dr. Liliana Fargo. "In the last few years under Gail's leadership, Open Communities has transformed and its mission expanded beyond housing justice to encompass a broader scope on social justice issues. Given David's expertise in organizational change, strategy development, policy advocacy, diversity & inclusion, and leadership coaching, he is the ideal leader to carry Gail's baton forward, and advance our expanded mission."

Most recently, Luna was the Principal of Teammates for Health Equity, a consulting and coaching practice operating in Chicago and Grand Rapids, Michigan that helped organizations in the health justice field develop and execute their strategic plans. He also was Vice President for Health Equity with Mercy Health Saint Mary's in Grand Rapids, where he oversaw the work of eliminating disparities in healthcare among all of its patient groups. Additionally during his 30-year career, Luna worked for almost a decade with the Latino Institute in Chicago to advance social justice for Chicago's Latino communities in education, immigration, and economic development. Early in his career, he also worked to expand housing opportunities for low-income Latinos as an attorney for Business and Professional People for the Public Interest.

"I have spent much of my career working for justice, and what I have found is that most people want to live and work in communities that try to be inclusive and fair towards all types of individuals and families," Luna said. "I see Open Communities' role as helping those in leadership and at the grassroots throughout the communities we serve come together to realize the vision of inclusiveness that most of us want. I'm excited to partner with our terrific staff, board, member congregations and organizations as we work towards our goal of northern suburbs that are truly and fully welcoming."

As the new Executive Director of Open Communities, Luna becomes part of a legacy of justice and the advancement of civil rights. The foundation for justice in the suburbs was laid by the North Shore Summer Project, a grassroots civil rights campaign, in the early 60s. The North Shore's first fair housing activists helped initiate laws to protect the rights of people to live wherever they want. It was solidified in the 70s and 80s under the leadership of the first Executive Director, Rayna Miller, and advanced beginning in the 90s by Schechter and her team.

Open Communities will host an event to thank Schechter and welcome Luna later this spring, and will be announcing specifics soon.

Luna received his BA and MBA from the University of Illinois at Chicago, and his JD from the University of Chicago. He is a Chicago native who now lives in Highland Park.

About Open Communities

Founded in 1972, Open Communities is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to educate, advocate and organize to promote just and inclusive communities in north suburban Chicago. The agency works with current and prospective residents and local groups to promote economically and culturally diverse communities. Its work includes the investigation of fair housing discrimination and landlord/tenant complaints, foreclosure and predatory lending counseling and prevention, Homesharing, immigrant leadership development, education justice, fair housing education and advocacy, and grassroots organizing. Its service area comprises the northern Cook and southern Lake County municipalities of Deerfield, Des Plaines, Evanston, Glenco, Glenview, Highland Park, Highwood, Kenilworth, Lincolnwood, Morton Grove, Niles, Northbrook, Northfield, Park Ridge, Skokie, Wilmette, and Winnetka.