

PRESS RELEASE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Open Communities Establishes Award to Honor Legacy of Justice Champion Jean R. Cleland; Expands Scope of Award Named for Rayna and Marvin Miller

Call for nominations continues through Feb. 15; celebration to honor recipients scheduled for June

Winnetka, IL, February 4, 2014 — Open Communities announces the creation of the Jean R. Cleland Social Action Award, named to honor one of the North Shore's most stalwart champions for housing justice and a founder of the organization. Cleland, a longtime Wilmette resident, died in September 2013 at age 89. Open Communities also has expanded the scope of its award named for Rayna and Marvin Miller from the Housing Justice Award to the Community Justice Award. Both awards signify the organization's transformation in 2012 from one focused exclusively on fair and affordable housing in the northern suburbs to one that promotes positive change by educating, advocating and organizing for economic and social justice as well.

"Jean's entire life was dedicated to justice and inspired by her deep religious faith," said Gail Schechter, Executive Director of Open Communities. "Her credo was, 'To those whom much is given, much is expected,' and we seek to recognize individuals who continue to carry out that credo by reaching out to their neighbors and making the northern suburbs a place that is welcoming to all, regardless of race, religion or income level."

The award named for the Millers, also founders of Open Communities, recognizes those who have boldly taken a stand for more open communities. The Millers were civil rights activists, first and foremost, and their activism found fruition in the North Shore Summer Project, which they and other north suburban residents – including Jean and her husband Bob Cleland – launched in 1961 to coalesce neighbors, religious leaders and students into a grassroots campaign to open housing markets.

"It is fitting that we expand the scope of the Miller Award because Rayna and Marvin were active in local politics, the peace and women's movements, religious causes, and the environmental movement – all part and parcel of what it takes to build holistic, inclusive communities," Schechter said. "Keeping their dream of affordable housing and social justice alive on the North Shore is what these awards are all about."

Nominees for both awards must be individuals or a group whose achievement is in a volunteer capacity. Outstanding achievement is understood to result from activities that advance the cause of housing, economic, or social justice through creative and courageous actions. Nominees also must be residents of Deerfield, Evanston, Glencoe, Glenview, Highland Park, Highwood, Kenilworth, Lincolnwood, Morton Grove, Niles, Northbrook, Northfield, Park Ridge, Skokie, Wilmette, or Winnetka.

Nominations are due by February 15, 2014. Award recipients will be honored at a celebration on Tuesday, June 10, 2014. For more details, visit www.open-communities.org

About Open Communities

Founded by local activists in 1972, Open Communities' mission is to educate, advocate and organize to promote just and inclusive communities in north suburban Chicago. Its membership includes residents, congregations and civic organizations. A not-for-profit organization, its free and confidential services include investigating fair housing discrimination and landlord/tenant complaints, foreclosure and predatory lending counseling and prevention, Homesharing, immigrant leadership development, education justice advocacy, fair housing education and affordable housing advocacy, and grassroots organizing. Formerly known as The Interfaith Housing Center of the Northern Suburbs, Open Communities expanded its mission and changed its name in 2012.

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