

# Just Suburbs

Spring 2014



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## Awards that honor our legacy

*Open Communities establishes an award to honor the legacy of justice champion Jean R. Cleland and expands the scope of the award named for Rayna and Marvin Miller*

They were more than fair and affordable housing advocates. They were champions of justice and inclusion. And they believed everyone deserves welcome. They were Rayna and Marvin Miller, and Jean Cleland, three of the original founders of Open Communities. And they have inspired us to identify and celebrate those who search for justice in our own time.

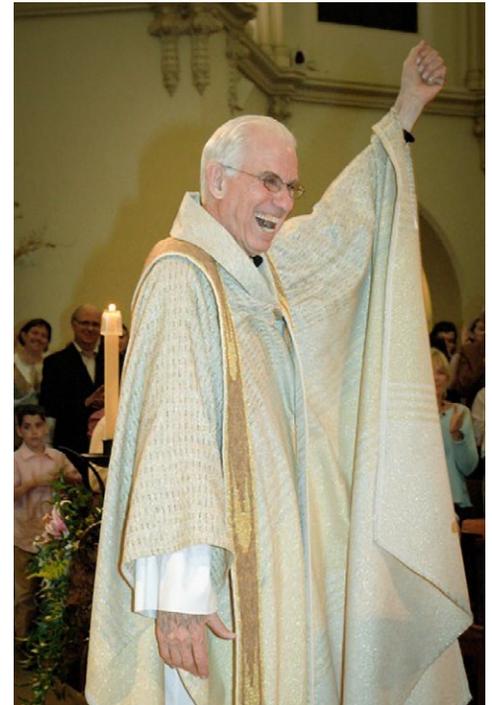
In a continuing effort to celebrate our rich legacy and use it as a catalyst to inspire others, Open Communities recently announced the creation of the Jean R. Cleland Social Action Award, named for the Wilmette social justice leader who died in September 2013 at age 89. **Ellen and Ed McManus**, Wilmette residents and long-time community advocates for affordable housing and accessibility to people with disabilities, will be the first Cleland Award recipients.

We also have expanded the scope of our award named for Rayna and Marvin Miller: from the Housing Justice Award to the Community Justice Award. **Father Robert Oldershaw**, Pastor Emeritus of St. Nicholas Church in Evanston, will be honored as this year's winner of the Rayna and Marvin Miller Community Justice Award, for his leadership in all areas of housing, economic and social justice that manifest as grassroots action for inclusive and diverse north suburban communities.

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, 'From those to 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."

*Continued on page 2*



Rev. Robert Oldershaw, winner of the 2014 Rayna & Marvin Miller Community Justice Award

Check our  
website  
for the full  
stories.

## Our Mission

Open Communities' mission is to educate, advocate and organize to promote just and inclusive communities in north suburban Chicago.

## KNOW YOUR NEIGHBORS



## A Storytelling Event to Celebrate Fair Housing Month

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

6:30 – 8:30pm

Wilmette Public Library

1242 Wilmette Ave., Wilmette, IL

## Board of Directors

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## Acknowledgements

Funds for this publication were provided in part through an award from Suburban Area Agency on Aging under Title III of the Older Americans Act as administered through the Illinois Department on Aging and Federal Administration on Aging. Further, the work that provided the basis for this publication was supported by funding under a grant with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The substance and findings of the work are dedicated to the public. The author and publisher are solely responsible for the accuracy of the statements, and the interpretations contained in this publication. Such interpretations do not necessarily reflect the views of the Federal Government.

## Non-discrimination

Open Communities does not discriminate in admission to programs or treatment of employment in programs or activities in compliance with the Illinois Human Rights Act; the U.S. Civil Rights Act; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act; the Age Discrimination Act; the Age Discrimination in Employment Act; and the U.S. and Illinois constitutions. If you feel that you have been discriminated against, you have the right to file a complaint with the Illinois Department of Aging. Call 1-800-252-8966 (voice and TDD) or contact Open Communities.

## Join Us!

Along with our expanded mission, we seek to reinforce and create partnerships with organizations and individuals eager to make a positive impact in their communities & those who share our belief that diverse, inclusive and open communities are healthy communities.

## Our Members

Am Shalom, Glencoe  
Baha'is of Wilmette  
Beth Emeth the Free Synagogue, Evanston  
Beth Hillel Bnai Emenah, Wilmette  
Christ United Methodist Church, Deerfield  
Church of St. Elisabeth, Glencoe  
Community Partners for Affordable Housing  
Congregation Bnai Torah, Highland Park  
Congregation Bnai Torah, Highland Park  
Congregation Hakafa, Glencoe  
Congregation Solel, Highland Park  
Deerfield Community Relations Commission  
First Congregational Church U.C.C., Wilmette  
First Presbyterian Church of Wilmette  
Glencoe Union Church  
Hemenway United Methodist Church, Evanston  
Holy Cross Parish, Deerfield  
Interfaith Action of Evanston  
Lakeside Congregation for Reform Judaism,  
Highland Park  
League of Women Voters of Deerfield  
League of Women Voters of Glencoe  
League of Women Voters of Wilmette  
League of Women Voters of  
Winnetka-Northfield-Kenilworth  
Lutheran Church of Ascension, Northfield

New Foundation Center (formerly WilPower), Northfield  
North Shore Village  
North Shore Unitarian Church, Deerfield  
North Shore United Methodist Church, Glencoe  
North Suburban Synagogue Beth El, Highland Park  
One Deerfield Place, Deerfield  
Our Lady of the Brook Parish, Northbrook  
Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish, Glenview  
Sacred Heart Church, Winnetka  
Second Baptist Church, Evanston  
Skokie Human Relations Commission  
Society of the Divine Word, Techny  
St. Augustine's Episcopal Church, Wilmette  
Sts. Faith, Hope, and Charity Parish, Winnetka  
St. Francis Xavier Church, Wilmette  
St. Mary's Parish, Evanston  
St. Norbert Church, Northbrook  
St. Paul Lutheran Church, Evanston  
St. Peter Community Church, Northbrook  
St. Philip the Apostle, Northfield  
Temple Beth Israel, Skokie  
Temple Jeremiah, Northfield  
Temple Judea Mizpah, Skokie  
Trinity United Church of Christ, Deerfield  
Winnetka Congregational Church  
Winnetka Presbyterian Church

## Awards that honor our legacy Continued from page 1

Ed and Ellen McManus are outstanding examples of drawing from one's own life experiences to better the world for others. As the parents of a daughter who is disabled, they have worked not only on behalf of people with disabilities in housing, small businesses, public accommodations, schools, but also for racially and economically diverse housing, gun control and peace.

Gail added that Fr. Oldershaw "walks the walk instead of merely talking the talk, welcoming Latino residents throughout the northern suburbs to his community and encouraging his parishioners in support of myriad human rights campaigns." In 2004, he said to a gathering of fellow clergy at an Open Communities forum, "We need to multiply ourselves – entrust and trust those within our communities to be heralds of justice, advocates for affordable housing. We should not answer as much as we question – calling the question for our folks who live very comfortably and securely. They and we need to be troubled by those who don't."



Ed and Ellen McManus, winners of the 2014 Jean R. Cleland Social Action Award, with their daughter Laura.

## Open Communities catalyzes “Wilmette Cares”



Wilmette Cares advocates include (left to right) Ann Jonaitis, Betty Phillips, Lorelei McClure, Gail Schechter, Lisa Braganca, and Puran Stevens

Open Communities is proud to have played a part in helping to launch one of the northern suburbs’ most exciting new social justice organizations: Wilmette Cares. Founded in 2013 following a gathering of Wilmette residents organized by Open Communities, Wilmette Cares is comprised of residents who advocate for affordable, accessible, and inclusive housing in the village.

“We love Wilmette and want to inspire our neighbors to embrace a spirit of fairness, empathy, and inclusion,” proclaims the group, which invites all to visit [www.wilmettecares.org](http://www.wilmettecares.org).

Wilmette Cares is an example of grassroots initiatives that Open Communities has supported or organized over the decades, such as Mixed Use for Mallinckrodt, United We Learn, Winnetka Is Neighborly, RELATE (Religious Leaders Acting Together for Equality), and the Wilmette Coalition for Group Homes. We provide expertise and support, free of charge, to north suburban residents concerned with justice issues in their communities – helping them to turn their passion for creating inclusive communities into concrete and productive action. These grassroots actions are both inspired by, and an embodiment of, the Welcome Movement at Open Communities.

Wilmette Cares’ founding was initially inspired by the desire to see affordable housing on Green Bay Road, right by the Metra Station.

But when the Village of Wilmette announced last fall that it would be ending its Village’s 35-year-old Housing Assistance Program (HAP), the group was by then in a strong position to push back. HAP was launched in 1979 to help very low-income seniors – renters and homeowners alike – keep their homes.

Today, the Program’s budget is \$45,000, just 0.13% of the Village’s budget, and helps 21 long-time seniors and people with permanent disabilities stay housed. Wilmette Cares and Open Communities have been urging the Village to continue to fully fund this important safety net for all residents.

Working with Northwestern University civic engagement students, Wilmette Cares is organizing a public forum on inclusive housing in Wilmette on Sunday, May 4th, from 3 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., at Mallinckrodt Center, 1041 Ridge – a building which includes affordable housing. All are welcome. For more information, visit [www.wilmettecares.org](http://www.wilmettecares.org).

If you or members want to organize like Wilmette Cares, contact our team today!

## Service, Compassion & Social Justice

Meet Oliver Jury, AmeriCorps VISTA member



In the spirit of our Welcome Movement and expansion of Open Communities, Oliver joined Open Communities last June as the AmeriCorps VISTA\* Research Associate. After graduating cum laude from the University of New Mexico with his B.A. in History and Political Science, he relocated to Chicago to begin his year

of service. “I chose Open Communities because it stands for equal opportunity while creating a welcome place for anyone to call home.”

Leading Open Communities’ field work on a National Fair Housing Alliance investigation of the maintenance of vacant, foreclosed bank-owned properties, he has uncovered disparities based on the racial makeup of the neighborhood. He has also quantified the positive outcomes to individuals and communities of Open Communities’ Foreclosure Prevention, Homesharing, and Landlord/Tenant Programs.

“I was surprised by how much work is done by organizations like Open Communities without any fanfare or press. Open Communities is always bustling. It seems before one issue is resolved, there is always a queue for more assistance, more advocacy, or more advice. As a newcomer, it was overwhelming.” We thank Oliver for his energy, intelligence, and spirit!

\* *The Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) program was founded in 1965 as a national service program fighting poverty in America.*



### What’s happening here? We need you!

If you see a vacant or abandoned home, call us! Perhaps someone lives there who needs help. Or perhaps it is owned by an absentee bank who doesn’t care about your block like you do. Call us at (847) 501-5760. Open Communities is **your** good neighbor.

# GET INVOLVED!

**Join Open Communities.** Know that you are an ambassador of welcome in the northern suburbs. A regular individual membership is \$75 or \$10 for students and low-income persons.

**Become a Fair Housing Tester** and earn a modest stipend while providing a valuable service. This is one way we investigate housing discrimination.

**Join our Organizing and Advocacy committee or our Membership and Outreach committee.** Contact Brendan Saunders for more details: [brendan@open-communities.org](mailto:brendan@open-communities.org)

**Join our board.** We are looking for board members. Inquiries may be sent to Gail Schechter.

**Volunteer technology skills.** We are looking not only for housing testers but also someone to assist in organizing our database. High school students welcome.

**Contact Gail** at 847.501.5760 or [gail@open-communities.org](mailto:gail@open-communities.org) if you're interested in volunteering or interning with any of our programs.

**Send your photo!** Our movement "We Are the North Shore" aims to highlight our diversity. Send your photo holding a sign saying "I am the North Shore" and a typed blurb of who you are to [wearetheNS@gmail.com](mailto:wearetheNS@gmail.com) and posted on <http://wearethenorthshore.tumblr.com>



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# Say YES! Benefit

Tuesday, June 10, 2014  
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The Woman's Club of Evanston  
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Proceeds benefit Open Communities work for inclusive and diverse Northern Suburbs  
For sponsorship and ticket information: [www.open-communities.org](http://www.open-communities.org) or call 847-501-5760

## HONORING

Reverend Robert H. Oldershaw, Rayna & Marvin Miller Community Justice Award  
Ellen and Ed McManus, Jean R. Cleland Social Action Award



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