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Jean R. Cleland (1923 - 2013): Embodiment of Peace and Justice

Jean R. Cleland embodied the phrase, “If you want peace, work for justice.” Jean never shied away from controversy, from doing what was right, what was “open-minded and enlightened” – “what Jesus would want me to be doing,” she recently said.

Jean was a founder of Open Communities in 1972, then called the North Shore Interfaith Housing Council. Before this, she was an integral part of the grassroots North Shore Summer Project that aimed to integrate the housing market against rampant discrimination against “Negroes, Jews, and Orientals.” Jean chaired the Wilmette Housing Commission when the Village created it in 1980 and was instrumental in getting Gates Manor (the suburb’s first low-income rental building) built in Wilmette on land owned by her church at the time, First Congregational U.C.C.

Jean and her husband Bob were about, and embodied, **welcome**. Whether it was as a large family with six children, as next-door neighbors, as community, interfaith and church leaders, or as people who would shelter families during the Sanctuary Movement, they were clear, grounded and warm. Both of them lived the credo, “To those whom much

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Jean Cleland dedicates monument to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on the Winnetka Village Green, July 25, 2007. Ms. Cleland was a life-long line leader against racial discrimination. She was an active member of the North Shore Summer Project in the early 1960s. She gave her equal housing pin to Dr. King who wore it at that 1965 rally, which attracted more than 8,000 supporters of a North Shore that is open to all.

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.



Fair Housing Protections Extended to Vouchers

Open Communities and Chicago-area colleagues such as the Metropolitan Tenants Organization, the Shriver Center on Poverty Law, and the Chicago Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law are cheering a major fair housing success.

As of August 2013, capping a 10-year campaign, voucher holders in suburban Cook County are fully protected under the County’s Human Rights Act. Landlords can no longer disqualify anyone just because they have a voucher, just like they can’t deny the opportunity to apply based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age, presence of children, sexual orientation, or military discharge status. Before the change, tenants were protected from discrimination based on lawful source of income such as child support and Social Security, but vouchers were excluded.

Since voucher holders are disproportionately African Americans, single-parent households, and people with disabilities, this new protection will promote integration.

Cook County has over 15,000 Housing Choice Voucher holders. Kudos to County Commissioners Jesus “Chuy” Garcia, Robert Steele, and Larry Suffredin for their leadership, with the staunch support of Cook County President Toni Preckwinkle. Voucher holders “need to be able to use the vouchers in great communities where they want to live,” said Commissioner Suffredin (13th District).

We look forward to working with landlords, tenants, and municipalities to further inclusive and welcoming communities!



Celebrating victory minutes after the affirmative vote by the County Board on May 8, 2013. From left to right: Betsy Shuman-Moore (Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights), John Bartlett (Metropolitan Tenants Organization), Cook County Commissioner Edwin Reyes, Brendan Saunders (Open Communities)

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Contact Information

614 Lincoln Avenue
Winnetka, IL 60093-2308
Ph: (847) 501-5760
Fax: (847) 501-5722
E-mail: info@open-communities.org
www.open-communities.org

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.



Eating Locally, Acting Globally

We launched our new program called Eating Locally Acting Globally in September 2013, underwritten by the Sally Mead Hands Foundation. Alicia De La Cruz, Immigrant Leadership Project Director, and Lali Watt, community leader, sustainable agriculture and environmental activist, are working together on this creative way to simultaneously promote sustainable agriculture and immigrant integration by organizing a culturally and economically diverse group of women who meet and exchange ways to eat healthy, locally grown foods in season.

To learn more about this program visit our website: www.opencommunities.org/Programs/Eating_Locally or like us on Facebook or follow us on Twitter for updates on the group and photos of delicious food.

Homesharing for Young Musician

"We were able to calm the fears of a New Hampshire mother whose 18-year-old daughter had been accepted to school in the area," said Jackie Grossmann, our Homesharing Coordinator. The mother worried that, "We don't know anyone in Chicago. My daughter has never lived in a big city and she won't have a car to get to school. This is my daughter's dream. How can we be sure that she will be safe and able even to get to school?"

Through Homesharing this young renter was welcomed into the home of a Skokie woman five blocks from her violin school. This is a "win-win" match. The homeowner benefits from the companionship and the \$500 more a month. The young renter is in a well-maintained home near school and her mom is breathing a sigh of relief!

Since 1985, we've arranged more than 1,000 matches in the northern suburbs. Homesharing service is free and confidential. Contact Jackie about the Homesharing program at 847.501.5732 ext. 401 or jackie@open-communities.org

Niles Homeowner Saved

The economic downturn did not spare an elderly Filipino nurse, a Niles homeowner of many years. With her hours cut in half, she turned to so-called "experts" who took her \$25,000 and did nothing. She could not even get a loan modification. Thanks to Open Communities' staff, in August she and her husband were approved for a trial loan modification, dramatically decreasing her payments with a potential principal reduction of over \$200,000. Expressing her gratitude, "Anna was so wonderful, honest and knowledgeable in giving me the guidance."

Open Communities is HUD-certified to provide one-on-one and group housing counseling services to prevent foreclosure, mortgage scams and lending discrimination. Our multi-lingual counselors are fluent in Polish, Russian and Spanish.

All our services are confidential and free of charge, which is true of all HUD-certified agencies. If you suspect a scam, call Open Communities, 847-501-5760.

Transit-Oriented Development in Skokie

Through a grant from the Sally Mead Hands Foundation we are collaborating with the Center for Neighborhood Technology to study and create a model plan/ordinance for Transit Oriented Development that includes housing for all people. We will be using the principals of Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing to create an equitable plan. We are working with the Village of Skokie as our model community and specifically looking at the Oakton Street Station. The goal is to combine economic and residential development to create an area that is walk-able, accessible, affordable, and equitable for all people.

Open Communities **Annual Celebration** & fundraising event.

Home for the Holidays!

Join us for a festive evening of wine and hors d'oeuvres and help us make inclusive communities a reality for all during the holidays and everyday.

December 5, 6:00 - 8:30 pm

\$25 per person – 1015 Tower Road, Winnetka

Sawbridge will donate 15% of sales to Open Communities. RSVP to Connie McGrail at (847) 501-5760, ext. 411 or connie@open-communities.org. \$5 raffle tickets, or 5 tickets for \$20 for a chance to win a Simon Pearce hand-blown glass bowl.



**SAWBRIDGE
STUDIOS**

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Jean R. Cleland (1923 - 2013)

is given, much is expected.” Jean Cleland is an example to all who seek inspiration from people of faith or high moral principle in the difficult but most deeply essential cause of racial and economic justice.

If you would like to celebrate Jean’s memory with a gift, the Cleland family is inviting donations to Open Communities.

Other supporters we will miss....

We also mourn the passing of Wilmette residents **Fred Axley, Mimi Ryan, Mari Terman,** and **Dr. William Thomas**, strong supporters of fair and affordable housing. Dr. Thomas was the first African American to purchase a home in Wilmette, in 1967. His wife Betty has been a volunteer for Open Communities.

Parent Mentor Program Expands in Skokie

In late November 2012, the Niles Township Schools’ ELL Parent Center invited Open Communities to partner with them in this innovative parent involvement program to bring it to two schools in Skokie. For the 2013-2014 school year, we have added four other schools in the Niles Township. The schools now include Madison, Devonshire, Fairview, Highland, Meyer and Stenson. Our group will exceed 50 people!

In this program, each Parent Mentor is assigned to a classroom at their child’s school (not in their own child’s class) where they are matched with a teacher and work one-on-one and in small groups with students. Not only are teachers getting extra assistance, but children are learning skills from these individuals who have so much to offer. In addition, teachers get to learn about another culture and parents get extra training and experience for their future endeavors.

As we work to build more diverse and inclusive communities, it is programs like this that really accomplish that vision.



Yolia, lunchroom supervisor, mentoring at Madison School in Skokie.

Community Organizers Honored at Miller Award Event

Whether the outcome is a modest home for a working family in Deerfield or the promise of an excellent education for any child in Illinois, it all starts with “a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens [to] change the world,” as Jan Marsden-Johnson, winner of Open Communities’ Housing Action Award, quoted Margaret Mead at the agency’s “Open Minds, Open Doors” celebration on May 29, 2013. Over 185 people nodded in agreement from throughout the northern suburbs and Chicago at the award reception and fundraising event at the Park Center at the Glen in Glenview.

In her 20th year as Open Communities’ Executive Director, Gail Schechter was honored with the 2013 Rayna & Marvin Miller Housing Justice Award for organizing racially, ethnically, and economically diverse residents in the northern suburbs. The \$25,000 in funds raised allows Open Communities to continue to build diverse and inclusive communities through grassroots organizing and advocacy.

Open Communities gratefully acknowledges the generosity of its event sponsors:

- ▶ Major Corporate Sponsors: BMO Harris Bank, First Bank of Highland Park
- ▶ Event Corporate Sponsor: North Shore Community Bank & Trust
- ▶ Patron Corporate Sponsor: First Bank & Trust
- ▶ Open Communities Friends: Ann Airey, Ellen & Michael Alter, Rev. Robert & Shirley Burkhart, Congregation Hakafa, Susan Marie Connor, Nancy & Bill Goldberg, The Hudson Company, Todd Logan, Illinois Association Of Realtors, Lakeside Congregation for Reform Judaism, Jen & Rick McQuet, North Shore-Barrington Association of Realtors, Northbrook Bank & Trust, Jennifer O’Neil, Saint Gregory’s Episcopal Church, Christine Strobel, Temple Jeremiah
- ▶ Everyone who attended the event, contributed to the silent auction, and otherwise made a donation.



Butler Sharpe, left, with Housing Action Award winners Gerald Howard and Jan Marsden-Johnson, who ushered in Deerfield’s first affordable workforce home.

EVENTS

All Open Communities **training sessions** are offered free of charge. Visit open-communities.org for more information or to register for any event.

November 2

The Evanston-North Shore branch of the **NAACP** is holding its annual Freedom Fund banquet at the Holiday Inn in Skokie. **Gail Schechter** is honored to be one of their 2013 award recipients.

November 3

Open Communities annual member event: **Incognito**, a 50-minute one-man play. Free and open to the public. 10:30 am at Takiff Center, 999 Green Bay Rd., Glencoe

December 5

Open Communities annual celebration and fundraising **event at Sawbridge Studios**. 6:00 - 8:30 pm. Tickets \$25. 1015 Tower Road, Winnetka

January 29

Fair Housing Tester Training. To register contact Casey Wittekind, 847-501-5760 x 501.

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.



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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

Come to our annual event featuring Incognito. See flyer insert.

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 if you're interested in volunteering or interning with any of our programs.

AWARD

Brendan Saunders received the Barbara Grau Outstanding Housing Advocate Award from the Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing. So well deserved!



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Follow Open Communities on Facebook and Twitter

Open Communities' annual member event is Incognito, a one-man play.

Imagine discovering you are not the person you thought you were. That you have a family, a history, an ethnicity you never knew. How would this discovery impact your life, the lives of those around you, your vision of yourself and society?



Sunday, November 3, 2013, 10:30 am, FREE and open to the public.

- **Location:** Takiff Center, 999 Green Bay Rd., Glencoe IL
- **Please RSVP** to Connie McGrail by Oct. 31, 2013, (847) 501-5760, connie@open-communities.org
- **Discussion:** 15-30 minute post-show discussion with audience and refreshments. Plus, learn more about Open Communities and how to volunteer.
- **Open Communities** is a leading voice for housing, economic and social justice in north suburban Chicago, working to promote inclusive communities that are welcoming to all.
- **Open Communities and Congregation Hakafa** are proud partners for this event.

