

WISCONSIN FAIR HOUSING NETWORK

4801 Forest Run Road ♦ Suite 201 ♦ Madison, WI 53704-7337

Dan Stotmeister
414-324-8022

FOR RELEASE
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STATEWIDE FAIR HOUSING AWARDS PRESENTED

The Wisconsin Fair Housing Network presented its annual Fair Housing Awards on Tuesday, July 17, 2018 during the statewide A Home For Everyone Conference of the Wisconsin Collaborative for Affordable Housing, held at the KI Convention Center in Green Bay, Wisconsin.

A 2018 **Special Recognition Fair Housing Award** (recognizing important contributions by an organization or individual for conspicuous and effective progress towards furthering fair housing in the community) was presented to **Thomas J. Diedrick of Green Bay**. As a professional serving persons with disabilities since 1980, Thomas Diedrick has just retired at the end of June as Executive Director of Options for Independent Living. Mr. Diedrick has been at the forefront of service delivery and an advocate for programs, education, technology and other means that assist individuals with disabilities and those who are older with alternatives to improve and enhance their level of independence. Of particular significance were his efforts to promote, plan and realize the building of a model showcase home and office complex that opened in May 1999 funded completely through a community capital campaign. The model facility shows people with disabilities as well as builders and developers what accessibility can look like in a home setting. Under Mr. Diedrick's leadership, Options also receives federal HOME funds covering 16 counties for home accessibility, rehabilitation, or repair for low or moderate-income persons with a disability and those who are older. Mr. Diedrick also has promoted affordable housing and equal housing opportunity as a member of the Community Housing Resource Board, a Commissioner of the Brown County Housing Authority, and a speaker at many conferences emphasizing the need for accessible housing throughout Wisconsin.

A 2018 **Fair Housing Individual Award** (recognizing exemplary performance by a volunteer, researcher, elected official or professional) was presented to **Yolanda Santos Adams of Kenosha**. Although she retired from the Urban League of Kenosha and Racine in the fall of 2017, Ms. Santos Adams continues her pursuit of justice and fair housing for the residents of Southeast Wisconsin, serving on a voluntary basis as a Wisconsin Poor People's Campaign Tri-Chair, Treasurer and Legal Liaison.

The national Poor People's Campaign is the embodiment of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s mission to achieve economic empowerment, access to opportunity, and freedom from racism, poverty, and violence. The Fair Housing Act passed in April 1968 in the aftermath of Dr. King's assassination. The Act not only protects individual rights, it also requires the promotion of diverse and inclusive communities. The Poor People's Campaign works to create diverse and inclusive communities by taking direct action, orchestrated by the low-income population being served, to change their communities. Ms. Santos Adams



facilitated the opening of the Milwaukee office on March 1, 2018 and expanded the Poor People's Campaign to the cities of Kenosha and Racine where she is connecting housing and segregation with other community issues including education, transit, economic development, and health. In addition to regular monthly education and strategy meetings, the Campaign organized six consecutive protests beginning in May 2018 at the State Capitol in Madison, designed to raise awareness about the issues poor people face, give Wisconsin lawmakers direct exposure to low-income people to, and to bring about needed policy changes.

This voluntary leadership position was requested of Ms. Santos Adams because of her years of leadership on civil rights, community development, and anti-poverty work, including with the League of United Latin American Citizens at the local, state and national levels, the Environmental Justice Task Force of the Southeast Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, the State of Wisconsin Council on Affirmative Action, and the NAACP, among others.

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