



Housing Rights ADVOCATE

Issue 22, Spring 2002

The Austin Tenants' Council

www.housing-rights.org

Attention: Manufactured Homeowners

As reported previously, Chapter 94 of the Texas Property Code took effect on April 1, 2002. These laws govern the rights of lot-lease tenants who own manufactured homes, and applies to manufactured home communities in which four or more lots are offered for lease. However, the new laws do not apply until a tenant signs a lease on or after April 1. This includes tenants that are month-to-month on or after that date. This is a huge achievement since these tenants had practically no rights before!

As discussed in previous issues, the new laws protect tenants in a variety of ways, from mandatory 6-month written contracts to 60-day termination notices to limiting when the lot owner may enter the manufactured home. At the same time, the laws increase the responsibilities of a manufactured home community landlord.

The Austin Tenants' Council has compiled all of the applicable laws into one brochure which is now available at our office or on our website. Questions about the new laws can also be answered through our telephone counseling line.

We would like to distribute our brochure to manufactured homeowners throughout the Austin metropolitan area because there are many tenants and landlords who are not aware of the new laws.

Thanks again to Representative Dawnna Dukes-Rhone, Senator Ron Lucio, the Southwest Regional Office of the Consumer's Union and everyone else involved in getting the Manufactured Housing Bill passed last year. If we're lucky, they can be just as successful in passing similar laws for residential tenants next legislative session.



Apartment Read & Change Program

A Warning for Tenants about Potential Problems

The Apartment Read and Change Program is a service offered by Austin Energy (the city's utility department) that is supposed to benefit both tenants and landlords. It costs less for the tenant to get the utilities connected, there is no "down time" in between tenancies, and it saves the City of Austin trips to read the meter.

Basically, the electricity is constantly on, either under a tenant's name or under the name of the apartment complex. For each new tenant, the manager fills out a Move In form with the tenant's information and meter reading and faxes it to the City. The tenant pays a \$10 connection fee instead of the regular \$20 fee. When the tenant moves out, the manager fills out a Move Out form which includes the final meter reading and faxes it to the City. At that time, the manager pays a \$10 fee to get the service transferred from the tenant's name into the complex's name.

This sounds like a good program that saves tenants both time and money, but only if the paperwork is completed properly. Specifically, the tenant has to depend on the manager to send the paperwork to Austin Energy who then stops billing the tenant. Sometimes managers fail to send the paperwork which causes problems for the tenant.

This was the case with one tenant who contacted us last November. He was still receiving utility bills even though he moved out of his apartment 50 days earlier. Because his former apartment complex participates in the Apartment Read and Change Program, the manager was responsible for notifying Austin Energy upon receipt of his apartment keys. At the time of his move out, though, the tenant and the manager were not getting along, and the tenant believes this is the reason why she did not contact the City.

We contacted Austin Energy on behalf of the tenant only to find out their policy is to give the apartment complex three chances to provide the Move Out form. Therefore, the tenant had to continue waiting. After calling and sending certified letters to the manager without a response, Austin Energy said it would now accept documentation from the tenant proving his move out date--such as a lease termination notice or a lease contract with a new apartment--and make the change in their computer accordingly. Because the tenant was involved in a dispute with the manager, he unfortunately moved without giving any kind of notice. In addition, his name was on a lease for a new apartment, but he was only an occupant and did not sign it. Austin Energy decided to accept the tenant's new lease showing him as an occupant, but also asked for the manager's name and phone number to verify that the tenant lives there.

Finally, after almost two months of phone calls from the tenant to the Austin Tenants' Council, Austin Energy, and the manager, the tenant's account was changed to reflect the correct move out date, and his balance was changed to zero.

It is important to remember that until Austin Energy receives the Move Out form from the manager, the tenant will continue to be billed for utility charges associated with that apartment. Therefore, it is equally important for the tenant to get copies of the Move Out form from the manager. In addition, the tenant should turn in a written lease termination notice and keep a copy.

Any tenant who is experiencing a similar problem, or for those who have questions about the Apartment Read and Change Program, should contact Austin Energy at 494-9400 for further assistance.



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Landlord-Tenant News

The Case of the Missing Deposit

The mystery began when Ms. Erilene Charles applied for an apartment at the Gardens of Decker Lake and was required to pay a \$450 application deposit. When she gave the money order to the manager it was not filled out. The manager said that she would fill it out and gave Ms. Charles a copy of the front of the money order showing the Gardens of Decker Lake as the payee.

Ms. Charles' application was denied, and when she went to get her \$450 money order, the management could not find it. They kept asking her to "come back later" and then decided she should get a refund of the money order from Western Union - the company who issued it. Frustrated, the client contacted ATC and Housing Counselor, Bruce Rodenborn, agreed to assist her through a mediation.

Bruce contacted the manager who said that the money order was lost and that the client should request a tracer to recover the money. The manager claimed that this procedure would only take a few days, whereas Western Union told the client it would take six to eight weeks.

Bruce contacted the manager again and explained that it was too long for Ms. Charles to wait for a refund, as she desperately needed the money to apply for other housing. By this time, a new manager had taken over at the Gardens of Decker Lake. The new manager said the only record she had of the money order was the application. She also suggested that the client get a refund from Western Union. The client contacted Western Union again and discovered that the money order had been cashed. Since the client had a copy of the money order showing Gardens of Decker Lake as the payee, Bruce demanded that the deposit be refunded. The manager still refused, claiming the money order may have been cashed by the client.

Unfortunately, the situation could not be resolved through mediation. The problem was that both parties were absolutely certain they were correct. The new manager did not have the money order or any record that it had been cashed by them. The client, on the other hand, had a copy of the application, copy of the money order from the previous manager, and even had confirmation from Western Union that

it had been cashed. It seemed clear to Ms. Charles and to ATC that she was owed a refund from the Gardens of Decker Lake.

After the client requested a full trace from Western Union, the case took an unexpected turn. The copy showed the money order was used to pay for automotive work at a local transmission shop. Though the manager gave the client a copy of the money order with the payee name "Gardens of Decker Lake", the copy of the cashed money order from Western Union showed that it had been actually filled out to the transmission shop.

Ms. Charles and Mr. Rodenborn were at a loss because it was difficult to reconcile the original copy of the money order that the client had been given by the previous manager and the copy from Western Union. Bruce then contacted the transmission shop, and they graciously agreed to provide

a copy of the customer's receipt who used the money order.

When it was revealed who used the money order,

the mystery was solved. The previous manager used the money order to pay for a new clutch on her Acura! Apparently, the previous manager had intentionally deceived the client by first copying the blank money order, filling out the copy and then making a copy of the copy to give to the client. Fortunately, the receipt from the transmission shop included the previous manager's name, drivers license number and her vehicle's VIN number.

Because of the unusual circumstances and because the client had been waiting for over four months for the return of her application deposit, she requested a referral to one of ATC's cooperating attorneys. Attorney Mark Lee agreed to represent the client and was able to settle the case. The District Manager of Gardens of Decker Lake was as shocked as the client and the Austin Tenants' Council at what had happened with the money order. Upon receiving the proof from the attorney, they acknowledged the mistake and were quick and courteous in settling the case by refunding the deposit and treble damages.

As for what the Gardens of Decker Lake intends to do with the previous manager - that is a mystery of a completely different nature.

Supreme Court Allows "No Fault" Evictions

The U.S. Supreme Court recently held that tenants may be evicted without fault. The Court decided that the federal regulations make it clear that public housing authorities have discretion to terminate the lease of a tenant when a member of the household, or a guest, engages in any criminal or drug related activity. More importantly, public housing authorities can exercise this right "Regardless of whether the tenant knew, or should have known, of the drug-related activity." The court emphasized that the word "any" as used in the federal regulations is broad and reaches not only criminal or drug activity that is known about, but also activities that the tenant did not know about or should have known about. In sum, the court justifies its decision on the premise of promoting safe, decent, and drug-free housing by using "no fault" evictions as a deterrent to criminal activity.

Despite this language, the Court emphasizes that discretion should be used prudently. Evicting tenants of public housing is not mandated, and should be used only in limited scenarios. Echoing this concern is HUD Secretary, Mel Martinez, who wrote in a statement to all Public Housing Directors:

"Evictions should be the last option explored, after all others have been exhausted. As Chief Justice William Rehnquist noted in the Court's opinion 'The statute does not require the eviction of any tenant who violated the lease provision. Instead, it entrusts that decision to the local public housing authorities, who are in the best position to take account of, among other things, the degree to which the housing project suffers from rampant drug-related or violent crime.'"

Mr. Martinez also said that "no fault" evictions are a tool that should be applied responsibly. Public housing authorities can only use this tool in extreme cases, where the environment and other extenuating circumstances justify their use. What will not be allowed are abusive tactics to root-out tenants using "no fault" evictions as a pretext to remove them. As Martinez writes, its use should be guided by "common sense and compassion." Balanced against its use will be common law and statutory defenses already available to public housing tenants.

The previous manager used the money order to pay for a new clutch on her Acura.



El Programa de *Apartment Read & Change*

Una Alerta para los Inquilinos Sobre Problemas Potenciales

El Programa de *Apartment Read & Change* es un servicio ofrecido por Austin Energy (el departamento de utilidades de la ciudad) que supuestamente beneficia tanto a los inquilinos como los propietarios. El servicio cuesta menos para conectar las utilidades del inquilino, las utilidades siempre se quedan prendidos, y la Ciudad ahorra viajes para leer el medidor.

Básicamente, la electricidad está constantemente conectada, bajo el nombre de un inquilino o el nombre de los apartamentos. Para cada nuevo inquilino, el gerente llena una forma de Entrarse con la información del inquilino y del medidor y la manda por fax a la Ciudad. El inquilino paga \$10 para la conexión, en vez de los honorarios regulares de \$20. Cuando el inquilino se muda, el gerente llena una forma de Mudarse que incluye el número final del medidor y la manda por fax a la Ciudad. El gerente paga \$10 de honorarios para transferir el servicio del nombre del inquilino al nombre de los apartamentos.

Parece un buen programa donde los inquilinos ahorran tanto tiempo como dinero, pero sólo si los papeles están llenados propiamente. Específicamente, el inquilino tiene que depender en el gerente para mandar los papeles a Austin Energy quien desconecta las utilidades en el nombre del inquilino. De vez en cuando, un gerente podría dejar de mandar los papeles lo cual causara problemas para el inquilino.

Así fue el caso con un inquilino quien nos habló el noviembre pasado. Él todavía recibía cuentas de Austin Energy aun cuando él se mudó de su apartamento 50 días anteriores. Como los apartamentos participan en el Programa de *Apartment Read & Change*, la gerente era responsable para notificar a Austin Energy al recibir las llaves del apartamento. En el momento de su mudanza, el inquilino y la gerente no se llevaban bien. El inquilino cree que es la razón por qué ella no mandó la forma a la Ciudad.

Nos pusimos en contacto con Austin Energy de parte del inquilino solamente para que nos dijera que su póliza es de dar a los apartamentos tres posibilidades para proporcionar la forma de Mudanza. Entonces, el inquilino tendría que continuar esperando. Después de dejar mensajes y mandar cartas certificadas a la gerente sin

una respuesta, Austin Energy dijo que ahora aceptaría documentación del inquilino que demuestra su fecha de mudanza--como un aviso terminando el contrato o un contrato con un nuevo apartamento--y Austin Energy haría el cambio en su computadora. Porque el inquilino estaba en disputa con la gerente, desafortunadamente él se mudó sin dar cualquier tipo de aviso. Además, su nombre aparece en un contrato para un nuevo apartamento, pero como era solo un ocupante, él no lo firmó. Austin Energy decidió aceptar el contrato nuevo del inquilino mostrándolo como un residente, pero también pidió el nombre del gerente y el número de teléfono para verificar que vive allí.

Finalmente, después de casi dos meses de llamadas telefónicas del inquilino al Austin Tenants' Council, Austin Energy, y a la gerente, la cuenta del inquilino fue cambiado para reflejar la fecha correcta de su mudanza, y cambió su balance a cero.

Es importante recordar que hasta que Austin Energy reciba la forma de Mudanza del gerente, el inquilino seguirá siendo facturado para gastos de utilidades asociados con aquel apartamento. Por lo tanto, es importante que el inquilino consiga una copia de la forma de Mudanza del gerente. Además, el inquilino debería entregar un aviso por escrito terminando el contrato y guardar una copia.

Cualquier inquilino que tiene un problema similar, o para los que tienen preguntas sobre el Programa de *Apartment Read & Change*, debería ponerse en contacto con Austin Energy al 494-9400 para más asistencia.



Lucha Contra la Discriminación en la Vivienda!

ATC necesita voluntarios para ayudarnos colector información acerca de las practicas de vivienda en Austin. Se necesitan personas quienes pueden colector información objetivamente acerca de vivienda disponible mientras afectan como un inquilino o comprador. Se provee entranamiento and se pagan los voluntarios según el trabajo pedido. Hable con Paul Leddy al 474-7007. (email: paul@housing-rights.org)

Atención: Dueños de Casas Móviles

Como reportado previamente, el Capítulo 94 del Código de Propiedades de Texas se puso en efecto el 1 de abril de 2002. Estas leyes gobiernan los derechos de los inquilinos quienes tienen casas móviles, y se aplican a las comunidades de casas móviles donde ofrecen cuatro lotes o más para alquilar. Sin embargo, las leyes nuevas no se aplican hasta que un inquilino firme un contrato con la fecha del 1 de abril o después. Esto incluye a los inquilinos que están rentando mes por mes. ¡Este es un logro enorme porque esos inquilinos no tenían prácticamente ningún derecho antes!

Como mencionado en ediciones anteriores, las nuevas leyes protegen a inquilinos de muchas maneras, como: contratos escritos obligatorios para 6 meses, avisos de 60 días para terminar un contrato, y la limitación cuando el dueño del lote puede entrar a la casa móvil. Al mismo tiempo, las leyes aumentan las responsabilidades de un propietario de una comunidad de casas móviles.

El Austin Tenants' Council ha compilado todas las leyes aplicables en un folleto que ahora está disponible en nuestra oficina o por nuestro *website*. Como siempre, preguntas sobre las nuevas leyes también pueden ser contestadas en nuestra línea de consejos.

Nos gustaría distribuir nuestro folleto a dueños de casas móviles en todas partes del área metropolitana de Austin porque estamos seguros que hay muchos inquilinos y propietarios quien no son conscientes de las nuevas leyes. Gracias a la dedicación del Consumer's Unión, esperamos lograrlo en los próximos meses.

Muchas gracias otra vez a la Representante Dawnna Dukes-Rhone, el Senador Ron Lucio, la Oficina Sudoeste Regional del Consumer's Union y todos los demás implicaron en la adaptación del Proyecto de Casas Móviles el año pasado. Si tenemos la suerte, ellos pueden tener tanto excito en la adaptación de leyes similares para inquilinos residenciales en la próxima sesión legislativa.



El Caso del Depósito Perdido

El misterio comenzó cuando la Sra. Erilene Charles solicitó un apartamento en Gardens of Decker Lake y tuvo que pagar un depósito de \$450 para la aplicación. Ella entregó el giro postal en blanco a la gerente. La gerente dijo que ella lo llenaría y dio a la Sra. Charles una copia del giro postal mostrando Gardens of Decker Lake como el beneficiario.

Rechazó la aplicación, y cuando la Sra. Charles fue a levantar su giro postal de \$450, la gerente no podía encontrarlo. La gerente siempre quería que la cliente "volviera más tarde" y luego decidió que ella debería conseguir un reembolso del giro postal de Western Union - la compañía quien se lo vendió. Sintiendo frustrada, la cliente se puso en contacto con ATC. Consejero de Vivienda, Bruce Rodenborn, concordó asistirle a ella por una mediación.

Bruce habló con la gerente quien dijo que el giro postal fue perdido y que la cliente debería solicitar una investigación para recuperar el dinero. La gerente sostiene que este

procedimiento sólo tomaría unos días, mientras Western Union dijo a la cliente que tomaría seis a ocho semanas.

Bruce habló con la gerente otra vez y explicó que era demasiado largo para que la Sra. Charles espere un reembolso, como ella desesperadamente necesitaba el dinero para solicitar otro alojamiento. A esta hora, una gerente nueva había empezado a trabajar en Gardens of Decker Lake. La gerente nueva dijo que el único registro que ella tenía del giro postal era la aplicación. Ella también sugirió que la cliente consiga un reembolso por Western Union. La cliente se puso en contacto con Western Union otra vez y descubrió que el giro postal había sido cobrado. Como la cliente tenía la copia del giro postal mostrando Gardens of Decker Lake como el beneficiario, Bruce exigió que el depósito fuera reembolsado. La gerente todavía rehusaba, reclamando que el giro postal podría haber sido cobrado por la cliente.

Desafortunadamente, la situación no podía ser resuelta por la mediación. El problema era que ambos partidos estuvieron absolutamente seguros que eran correctos. La gerente nueva no tenía el giro postal ni ningún comprobante de que se había sido cobrado por los

apartamentos. Por otra parte, la cliente tenía una copia de la aplicación, la copia del giro postal de la gerente anterior, y aún tenía confirmación de Western Union que se había sido cobrado. Se parecía claro a la Sra. Charles y a ATC que Gardens of Decker Lake le debía un reembolso.

Después de que la cliente solicitó una investigación completa de Western Union, el caso tomó una vuelta inesperada. La copia mostró que el giro postal fue usado para pagar un labor en un taller local de transmisiones. Aunque la gerente dio a la cliente la copia del giro postal con el nombre "Gardens of Decker Lake" como beneficiario, la copia del giro postal cobrado de Western Union mostró que en realidad había sido llenado con el nombre del taller.

La Sra. Charles y el Sr. Rodenborn eran perplejos porque era difícil de reconciliar la copia original del giro postal con la que la gerente anterior había dado

a la cliente y la copia de Western Union. Bruce entonces se puso en contacto con el taller de transmisiones lo cuyo proporcionó una copia del recibo del cliente quien usó el giro postal.

Cuando fue revelado quien usó el giro postal, el misterio fue solucionado. ¡La gerente anterior usó el giro postal para comprar un embrague nuevo para su Acura! Parece que la gerente anterior intencionadamente había engañado a la cliente por primeramente copiar el giro postal en blanco, llenar la copia, y luego hacer una copia de la copia para dar a la cliente. Por suerte, el recibo del taller incluyó el nombre de la gerente anterior, el número de su licencia y el número de identificación de su vehículo.

Por las circunstancias insólitas y porque la cliente había estado esperando más de cuatro meses para el reembolso de su depósito, ella pidió una referencia de nuestra sistema de abogados. El abogado Mark Lee estuvo de acuerdo con representar a la cliente y pudo colocar el caso. La Directora Regional de Gardens of Decker Lake fue tan sorprendida como la cliente y el Austin Tenants' Council en lo que había pasado con el giro postal. Al recibir la prueba del abogado, ella reconoció el error y colocó el caso rápido y cortes por reembolsar el depósito y daños

Celebraciones de Vivienda Justa

El Programa Cooperativa de Vivienda Justa de Texas (TCFHP) celebró el Mes de Vivienda Justa de 2002 en dos acontecimientos en Texas. TCFHP es una sociedad financiada por HUD, creada por el Programa de Vivienda Justa de ATC (ATCFHP), la Comisión de Texas de Derechos Humanos y el Concilio de Vivienda Justa de San Antonio (SAFHC).

Cynthia García, Especialista de Vivienda Justa en ATCFHP, Shaun Ortiz, Especialista y Sandra Tamez, la Directora Ejecutiva de SAFHC representaron la sociedad durante la Semana Anual de CDBG y Vivienda Justa patrocinada por el Programa de Condados Urbanos en Río Grande del Condado Hidalgo. John Benavides, el Supervisor de Programa de la Comisión de Texas de Derechos Humanos, representó la sociedad en la Coalición de Vivienda Justa en el Triángulo de Oro en Orange, Texas.

Proclamaciones para el Mes de Vivienda Justa reconociendo abril como el Mes de Vivienda Justa firmado por Rick Perry, el Gobernador de Texas, fueron presentadas por la sociedad a la Coalición de Vivienda Justa del Triángulo de Oro y Elizabeth Gómez, la Coordinadora del Programa de Condados Urbanos en el Condado Hidalgo. La proclamación pidió a los Tejanos que celebren los avances hechos bajo el Acto de Vivienda Justa durante más de tres décadas, mientras reafirmando el compromiso a la imparcialidad y la oportunidad en la vivienda. La proclamación también indicó, "En 1989, la Legislatura de Texas pasó el Acto de Vivienda Justa de Texas que solidifica el compromiso de nuestro estado al espíritu de imparcialidad y la no discriminación. Sabemos bien que el prejuicio y la discriminación de parte de uno estorba el camino de prosperidad y el avance para todos."



triples.

En cuanto a lo que Gardens of Decker Lake intenta de hacer con la gerente anterior - eso es un misterio completamente diferente.



Fair Housing News

The Face of Discrimination

28 sex (gender or harassment), 4 color and 3 based on religious discrimination. During that same period, ATC assisted 92 persons with requests for reasonable accommodation or modification due to disability. We are pleased to report that more than 72% of landlords voluntarily complied with their requests without enforcement action. However, the ATC Fair Housing Program filed 70 formal housing discrimination complaints with the Department of Housing and Urban Development from 2000-2002. Twenty-five were based on disability, 18 on race, 12 on national origin, 11 on familial status, 3 on sex, and 1 on religion. ATC reports the outcomes of complaints filed with HUD and litigation on behalf of complainants in our Fair Housing Case Updates.



ATC Fair Housing Complaint Intake by Protected Class from 2000-2002

The Austin Tenants' Council Fair Housing Program reports a continued rise in the number of complaints of housing discrimination based on disability in the Central Texas area, as well as statewide from 2000-2002. ATC receives housing discrimination complaints based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, familial status and disability through two HUD-funded fair housing programs. They are the ATC Private Enforcement Initiatives Program and the Texas Cooperative Fair Housing Partnership, which operates in conjunction with the San Antonio Fair Housing Council and the Texas Commission on Human Rights.

Since 1992, the percentages of complaints based on disability (physical and mental) have comprised more of the overall number of housing discrimination complaints processed by the ATC Fair Housing Program. This type of complaint has risen from more than 25% of the total number of complaints in '94-95 to 52% in 2000-2002. Housing discrimination complaints based on race were 16%, familial status complaints were 13%, national origin complaints 8%, sex (gender or harassment) 4%, color 1% and religion less than 1%. Other complaint intakes totaling 6% were either based on other housing laws such as the City of Austin Fair Housing Ordinance or had no protected class basis and were referred to other housing resources for resolution.

From 2000 to 2002, 389 complaints based on disability were processed, 119 race-based complaints, 98 familial status complaints, 60 national origin complaints,

Fair Housing Celebrations

The Texas Cooperative Fair Housing Program (TCFHP) celebrated Fair Housing Month 2002 at two events in Texas. TCFHP is a HUD-funded partnership created by the Austin Tenants' Council Fair Housing Program (ATCFHP), The Texas Commission on Human Rights and The San Antonio Fair Housing Council (SAFHC).

Cynthia Garcia, Fair Housing Specialist at ATCFHP, Shaun Ortiz, Fair Housing Specialist and Sandra Tamez, Executive Director of SAFHC represented the partnership at the annual CDBG Week and Fair Housing Exhibit sponsored by the



L to R: Cynthia Garcia-ATCFHP, Shaun Ortiz-SAFHC, Elizabeth Gomez-Hidalgo County, Sandra Tamez-SAFHC

Urban County Program in the Rio Grande Valley in Hidalgo County. John Benavides, Program Supervisor of the Texas Commission on Human Rights, represented the partnership at the Golden Triangle Fair Housing Coalition in Orange, Texas.

Fair Housing Month proclamations recognizing April as Fair Housing Month signed by Rick Perry, Governor of Texas were presented by the partnership to the Golden Triangle Fair Housing Coalition and Elizabeth Gomez, Coordinator of the Urban County Program in Hidalgo County. The proclamation asked that Texans celebrate the advances made under the Fair Housing Act for over three decades, while reaffirming the commitment to fairness and opportunity in housing. The proclamation further stated, "In 1989, the Texas Legislature passed the Texas Fair Housing Act solidifying our state's commitment to the spirit of fairness and nondiscrimination. We know well that prejudice and discrimination on the part of one stand in the way of prosperity and advancement for all."



Welcome Debbie

Debbie joined ATC's staff in March as Law Clerk for our Fair Housing Program. Debbie researches and develops fair housing cases for ATC and our Cooperating Attorneys. She also recruits area attorneys for our Cooperating Attorney Referral System.

Debbie received her J.D. from the University of Texas School of Law in December 2001. She received her B.A. in Economics and German from Vanderbilt University in 1999. She served as an Honors Program Law Clerk at the Office of General Counsel at the U.S. Department of Defense in the Summer of 2001 and a Staff Writer/Intern on The Washington File at the U.S. Department of State during Spring, 1999. She has worked as a law clerk for the housing division at Legal Aid of Central Texas, has volunteered for the Political Asylum Project of Austin, and served on the Public Interest Law Association Executive Board at U.T. from 2000-2001. Debbie is also active in the community and has volunteered with Habitat for Humanity.

Programs and Services / Programas y Servicios

FAIR HOUSING VIVIENDA JUSTA

THE FAIR HOUSING PROGRAM / EL PROGRAMA DE VIVIENDA JUSTA - This program helps any person in the Austin metropolitan area who has been discriminated against in the rental, sale, financing or appraisal of housing. FHP investigates complaints and coordinates legal services to assist victims of discrimination when their rights under State and Federal fair housing laws have been violated. *Este programa ayuda a cualquier persona en el area metropolitana de Austin quien se ha enfrentado con discriminación en la renta, compra, financiamiento, o evaluación de vivienda. El FHP investiga las quejas y coordina servicios legales para las victimas de discriminación cuando sus derechos están violados bajo las leyes estatales y federales de vivienda justa. Call / llame al 474-7007.*

TENANT-LANDLORD INQUILINO-PROPIETARIO

TELEPHONE COUNSELING / CONSEJOS POR TELEFONO - Trained counselors answer tenant-landlord questions and make appropriate referrals. However, ATC offers no legal advice. *Consejeros contestan preguntas acerca de inquilinos-propietarios y hacen referencias necesarias. Sin embargo, ATC no ofrece consejo legal. Call / llame al 474-1961.*

IN-HOUSE COUNSELING / CONSEJOS EN LA OFICINA - Counseling information and materials are provided to clients in need of more in-depth assistance. *Se provee información y materiales a los clientes que necesitan mayor información. Call for an appointment / llame para una cita a 474-7006.*

CRISIS INTERVENTION / INTERVENCION CRISIS - Counselors mediate on behalf of tenants to resolve emergencies that threaten their housing. *Consejeros median en nombre del inquilino a resolver una emergencia que amenase su vivienda. Call / llame al 474-1961.*

RENTAL REPAIR ASSISTANCE / AYUDA CON REPARACIONES DE ALQUILER - The Renters' Rights Assistance Program helps low-income renters enforce their rights for repairs through advocacy and mediation. *El Programa de Asistencia con los Derechos de Inquilinos ayuda a los inquilinos de bajo ingreso da fuerza a sus derechos para reparaciones por medio de negociación y mediación. Call / llame al 474-7006.*

LEASE FORMS / CONTRATOS - ATC provides lease packets and brochures describing landlord and tenant rights and responsibilities to landlords for a small fee. *ATC vende paquetes de contratos y folletos, por una cuota nominal, describiendo los derechos y las responsabilidades del propietario y del inquilino. Call for more information / llame para mayor información a 474-7006.*

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