

DIVERSITY GRANT

Memphis Area Association of REALTORS® Uses Diversity Grant to Commemorate Historic 50th Anniversaries

May 2018

Fifty years ago, the Fair Housing Act was signed into federal law just seven days after Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated in the city of Memphis. As both these events are being commemorated around the nation, the Memphis Area Association of REALTORS® (MAAR), mindful of its particular association with them, designed a program to honor Dr. King's legacy and bring awareness to the importance of the landmark legislation in greater Memphis. Called the MAAR "Day of Unity," its impact will reach far beyond the powerful day-long event.

Kate Reddan, Events Coordinator of the 3,700-member association, credits an exceptionally passionate and resourceful leadership with the success of the program, and the vision that brought it into being. "Lauren Wiuff, our 2018 President, along with the Board of Directors, wanted the dual-commemoration to be part of their strategic plan, and to be executed in the most educational and inspiring way, in order to have the strongest impact on members and the community." Working with Cultural Diversity Committee Chair Cassandra Bell-Warren, Fair and Affordable Housing Committee Chair Deborah Williams, and Blight Taskforce Chair Brenda Hampton, with the support and insight of MAAR CEO Melanie Blakeney, Wiuff developed a plan that incorporated a members' two-mile Freedom Walk to the Lorraine Motel where King was killed; a Fair Housing luncheon, featuring poignant videos of members reminiscing about the passage of the historic act; and a tour of the National Civil Rights Museum.

The program was funded by a REALTOR® Party Diversity Initiative Grant, and just putting the grant application together, notes Reddan, was a moving experience for all involved. Says Wiuff, "The MAAR Day of Unity brought our membership together to commemorate two historical events: the 50th Anniversary of the Fair Housing Act and the 50th Anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The event celebrated, honored, and promoted unity and diversity within our membership and the city of Memphis, where, as REALTORS®, we are committed to embracing those principles every day."

A few weeks later, with funding from the same grant, MAAR sponsored a highly successful Blight Forum & Fair Housing Fair. Billed as an opportunity to tackle the topic of blight and anti-blight initiatives with a panel of experts, it drew a capacity-crowd of members, who then took part in the fair, which featured representatives from the National Association of Real Estate Brokers (NAREB), the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Tennessee Housing Development Agency, the Women's Council of REALTORS®, Disability Rights Tennessee, Memphis Legal Services, and various lending agencies.

The dedicated members of MAAR aren't stopping there, says Reddan: the association's strategic plan for 2018 includes many more activities and events that celebrate diversity, unity, and the fact that "Fair Housing Makes Us Stronger." In the fall, the committees that have been working on these issues will host a Vision Board event, where members will discuss what they've learned and brainstorm ways to carry initiatives forward into 2019.

To learn more about how the Memphis Area Association of REALTORS® is bringing people together and shining a light on Fair Housing, Cultural Diversity, and the progress of the Civil Rights Movement, contact Kate Reddan, MAAR Events Coordinator, at 901-818-2435. Also view the Memphis Area Association of REALTORS®' Commemorating the Fair Housing Act video series.

DIVERSITY GRANT

Partnership Spurs Diversity for the Grosse Pointe REALTORS®

February 2018

Fifty years ago, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke at a high school in the affluent, nearly all-white Detroit suburb of Grosse Pointe, Michigan. At the anniversary event this March memorializing King's "The Other America" speech, the Grosse Pointe Board of REALTORS® (GPBR) will be among many in the community marking Grosse Pointe's progress toward diversification and social equality. It will also be a time to provide thinking about what remains to be done.

According to Bob Taylor, Chief Executive Officer of the almost 1,000-member board, this is not an interest that gets dusted off for special occasions, just as Fair Housing is not something that the board saves for the month of April. "Promoting diversity and equal opportunity is a mindset. We've internalized it, so that it impacts all our decisions and thinking," he says. He credits an exceptionally engaged and focused Fair Housing & Diversity Committee, led for four years by Ursel Mayo, with bringing about this change. Supported by a Board of Directors led this year by Lori Jaglois and last year by Mario Como, Fair Housing & Diversity are part of the board's daily consciousness.

"We wanted to have constructive conversation, provide insight, and eliminate 'if we're talking about Fair Housing it must be April' thinking," explains Jaglois. "Consequently, we no longer have 'Fair Housing Month' recognition. Instead, there's a dedicated "Fair Housing" component at each of our four yearly membership meetings." GPBR offers the NAR's "At Home With Diversity" certification class annually, in the past using REALTOR® Party Diversity Initiative Grants to keep the cost down. Jaglois is proud to note that attendance is always robust: the last class, taught by Mayo, had upwards of 40 participants. Twice in the last four years, GPBR also offered the REALTOR® Party's "Leading With Diversity" program. Most recently, the Detroit Association of REALTORS® was a co-host, with Fred Underwood from the National Association of REALTORS® and Dr. Agustin V. Arbulu, the Director of the Michigan Department of Civil Rights, co-presenting.

A new GPBR initiative called "All in for Diversity" available to members for a small contribution, allows those who want to bolster funding specifically for diversity projects to do so. In 2017, the board partnered with the Grosse Pointe Public School System to produce a calendar celebrating diversity as seen through the eyes of the community's K-12 school children. The project generated more than sixty submissions, thirteen of which the GPBR jury selected to feature on the handsomely produced calendar. It was offered for sale to the membership and to families in the school system, with all proceeds going to the schools for further diversity efforts.

Rebecca Fannon, a representative of the Grosse Pointe Public School System, can't say enough about the REALTORS® involvement in strengthening the community: "The Grosse Pointe Board of REALTORS® has been an amazing partner with the school system over the years, promoting the area with community open houses, and assisting

in projects coordinated by the local Chamber of Commerce. The Diversity Calendar project took this partnership one step further. Our school system was honored to participate, and so grateful that the proceeds from the calendar sales were donated to continued implementation of the district's diversity initiatives outlined in our Strategic Plan.”

GPBR has close ties with the Detroit chapter of the National Association of Real Estate Brokers, and plans to begin working with them, and other diversity groups in the area, to strengthen efforts that support diversity and inclusion. “If we can share resources like Placemaking Grants and Housing Opportunity training with groups that share our interests, then that moves everybody forward,” says Taylor.

In 2017, Ursel Mayo, a long time member of the GPBR's Board of Directors, was selected to be President-elect for 2018, the first African American to hold that position. Is that because the Board wanted a person of color at the forefront? “I don't believe color had anything to do with the decision” says Taylor. “The Board of Directors felt she was the very best person for the job, and she happens to be African-American.” Our goal is to seek those who are most passionate about serving our members, and encourage them to be in leadership. President Jaglois, herself a tremendous leader, urged Ursel to consider the role. We are extremely fortunate to have this kind of thoughtful and focused leadership. It's the reason this board is making a difference in Grosse Pointe — and beyond.”

To learn more about how the REALTORS® of Grosse Pointe, Michigan are taking a leadership role in promoting diversity in their community, contact Chief Executive Officer Bob Taylor, at 313-882-8000 x3.