

Realtor® Association Embarks on New Tradition; Spreads Fair Housing Message

Earlier this year the FHCO submitted articles to housing industry publications and trade associations' membership newsletters announcing our annual fair housing poster contest (see page 5 for contest details and this year's winning poster). The Columbia County Board of Realtors® took it and ran with it. This is their story...

Inspired by both the message of fair and equitable housing and the idea of reaching young children with that message, the Columbia County Board of Realtors® (CCBR) embarked on a new tradition this year. Betty Karsten, The Board's Treasurer and Broker with John L Scott, was among the first to read the FHCO's article and envision the inherent win-win the poster contest offers—a creative learning opportunity for local children complete with competitive cash prizes and a positive message for local Realtors® to share with the community they serve.

Lisa Frahm, the Board President and Broker with Prudential Northwest Properties, seconded Betty's enthusiasm. Lisa highly values her own children's activities and, as such, welcomed Betty's initiative to get Realtors® and affiliate members involved. Board members offered creative input and even went so far as to allocate funds for materials for those schools that may have been lacking. Betty personally reached out to the Scappoose School District where she received positive feedback. As a result, several Scappoose classrooms utilized supplies donated by the Board.

Contacting school principals directly, as well as individual teachers proved most productive. Those who were most receptive were individual teachers who voluntarily promoted the project to their students and offered time in class to create the posters or directly sent home information about the contest. With greater lead time in 2011, CCBR hopes to reach additional schools, teachers, children, and households in their area.

According to Bev Lombardo, CCBR's Association Executive, "Could there be a more important concept for Realtors® to put in the minds of children than their right to choose where they live? Many of our members are parents personally involved with their kids' schools and teachers. If some of them are willing to get involved by distributing the FHCO's contest brochures¹, going over the contest rules on a one-on-one basis, or helping out by gathering up finished posters ready for submission, a real tradition could begin to develop. I have seen it happen at other real estate boards and it was an association project that members really got behind and totally enjoyed! As members shared the experiences they had with individual schools, cute, talented, and even a few perfectly awful posters accumulated spurring even more members to join in the fun."

We hope the activism and commitment the Columbia County Board of Realtors® showed this year will inspire you to do the same next year. And it's never too early to start! Whether you're an individual parent; a private citizen; a member of a landlord, Realtor®, or other trade association, you too can get involved and spread the word! Please feel free to include information about the contest in your own newsletters and mailings; post the contest brochure in the front window of your office; encourage the families you know (including your own!) to enter. Just be sure to refer folks to www.FHCO.org/contest.htm.



Any child in grades 1 through 8 may submit an entry free of charge and anyone can join in by raising awareness of this fun campaign, distributing needed supplies, or picking up entries and delivering / shipping them to the FHCO office in Portland. If you have questions about how to get started, contact jbecker@FHCO.org—we'd love to see this win-win offering grow and flourish!



A WIN-WIN-WIN-WIN!

A Win for Kids and Schools:

- A lifelong lesson in civil rights and housing choice
- A ready-made, age-appropriate student exercise
- A fun and creative contest with cash prizes

What You Can Do: If you or someone you know is directly involved with the schools promote the contest to teachers and administrators; seek material donations from community organizations.

A Win for Housing Industry Trade Associations:

- A reminder of the importance of fair housing laws
- A ready-made opportunity for associations to engage their members in a community activity
- A fun and easy way to raise awareness about the association's support of an important issue

What You Can Do: Call a task force to oversee the project; ask your Board to support the contest locally; gather a list of local school contacts for interested members to contact directly; assign individual members who are interested a specific school or teacher to reach out to; solicit materials donations from members; designate the association as a drop-off location for entries; offer to mail / deliver entries for children; promote the contest to your members as well as the larger community.

A Win for Association Members:

- A reminder of the importance of fair housing laws
- A ready-made opportunity for individual members to pass on fun and useful information to the clients and residents they work with
- A fun and easy way to get your name out there while publicly endorsing equity laws

What You Can Do: Talk to your kids' or grandkids' teachers; tell your neighbors; promote the contest in your own personal newsletters and marketing materials; designate your office as a drop-off location for entries; offer to mail / deliver entries for children.

A Win for the Community at Large:

- A reminder that fair housing protects us all
- A ready-made opportunity to profile local talent
- A fun and easy way to build community

What You Can Do: Support children by collaborating with local businesses to promote the contest and donate materials; collect local entries in order to feature copies of the submissions in local restaurants and businesses before sending them on to the FHCO to compete.

Article by FHCO Staff

¹ Poster brochures are published and distributed each January at which time they're also posted at www.FHCO.org/contest.htm. You're welcome to download the brochure there or contact the FHCO for hard copies to hand out.