

PRESS RELEASE

Interfaith Housing Center of the Northern Suburbs
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Gail Schechter, Executive Director of the Interfaith Housing Center of the Northern Suburbs, will be receiving the North Shore-Barrington Association of Realtors' (NSBAR) 2004 Humanitarian Award for her work at the helm of Interfaith to realize a fair and just housing market. The NSBAR Awards and Installation luncheon takes place on September 22, from 1:00-4:00 pm at the Chevy Chase Country Club, 1000 N. Milwaukee, Wheeling.

Interfaith was founded by clergy and civic leaders in 1972 following a large gathering, "The Inclusive Community: Challenge to Church and Synagogue." Since then, Interfaith has been the primary private fair housing enforcement agency serving the northern suburbs. This year, its fair housing staff has already helped prevent four long-time Evanston residents from losing their homes to predatory lenders. Over the last thirty years, Interfaith has trained and deployed fair housing testers to investigate allegations of discrimination, and assisted victims to find redress through the courts or through public enforcement entities, such as HUD, the Cook County Human Relations Commission, and local communities.

In addition, Interfaith has worked together with residents to preserve and develop affordable housing throughout the area. Most recently, Interfaith helped to organize Wilmette residents to ensure that the historic Mallinckrodt College building be redeveloped into mixed-income senior housing instead of luxury homes. Interfaith has also assisted low-income renters to organize to improve and preserve their housing, as in Morton Grove and Highwood. Interfaith also operates a Homesharing Program, assisting residents to remain in the community by finding them housemates. Interfaith has facilitated more than 850 such matches, enabling hundreds of individuals to find affordable housing close to jobs, schools, and families, in the homes of people who need the help, usually seniors who would otherwise be forced to move.

Gail Schechter is the first full-time Executive Director of Interfaith, having originally come to the agency in December 1993 as a shared executive director between Interfaith and its sister agency, the Interfaith Housing Development Corp. Originally from New York City, she has over twenty years' experience in fair housing advocacy, tenant organizing, and public policy development.

The North Shore-Barrington Association of Realtors annual award is given to individuals and groups who have made a significant contribution to furthering fair housing. Past recipients have been U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky from the 10th District and the Village of Skokie. For more information on the luncheon, contact NSBAR at 847-480-7177. Interfaith can be reached at 847-501-5760 or www.interfaithhousingcenter.org.

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