



## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SPEAKS OUT



Executive Director **Robert J. Brothers, Jr.** reports that the Central Office is slated to move before the end of the year. He said, "This move is unlike any other in the Agency's recent history, in that the Office of Public Hearings (OPH) is being housed separately from the rest of the agency." Although it will be an adjustment for OPH and the CHRO Attorneys that appear before OPH, the Director believes that "in the interest of justice the Attorneys and Referees will make it work." "Cases will be adjudicated and justice will be served." Amidst the move he commends his staff for advancing the Agency's agenda of providing outreach to all of the communities that the Commission serves. Please join the CHRO for an **Informational Session in Bridgeport at Burroughs-Saden Library, 925 Broad Street, on Monday, December 13, 2010 from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.** Go to [www.ct.gov/chro](http://www.ct.gov/chro) to view the flyer. Additionally, the CHRO will host an all day **Contract Compliance Fair** in Bridgeport on December 16, 2010 at Burroughs-Saden Library from 10:30-3:00 p.m.

## ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

*Employment cases settled during the Investigative stage*

**November \$279,118**

*Housing cases settled during the investigative stage*

**November \$54,300**

## IN THE COMMUNITY



**HRO Representative Neva Vigezzi**-- a thirty two year employee of the CHRO, and a native of Waterbury seemed at home as she answered questions from the public and provided substantive information about CHRO's enforcement activities, during an informational session held in her hometown on November 19, 2010. **Commissioners Cheryl Clarke and Andrew Norton**, CHRO Attorneys **Michelle Keuler, Alix Simonetti, Kim Jacobsen and Cheryl Sharp** and West Central Regional Manager **Pekah Wallace** were joined by **Hearing Referees Thomas Austin and J. Allen Kerr** and private attorneys **Cynthia Jennings, Nick Zaino and Mary Kelly** at the informational session. The CHRO complaint and public hearing processes were discussed. **State Representative Larry Butler** and a crowd that

consisted of community leaders, the general public, co-sponsors of the event and private attorneys heard from experts in anti-discrimination law. The Police Activity League in Waterbury was buzzing as attendees posed questions such as: "Can the Commission initiate complaints when there is a systemic issue of discrimination in housing?"; "How are school systems held accountable when they fail to accommodate the needs of disabled students?"; "How are the CHRO attorneys different from the Referees?" The CHRO's complaint and public hearing processes were discussed in detail. Referees **J. Allen Kerr** and **Thomas C. Austin** explained the role of the Referees in the CHRO process. The event was co-sponsored by **AAAC, LPRAC, APAAC, PCSW and the NAACP.**

## COMMISSIONER'S CORNER



**CHRO Commissioner Shelly Best** says "civil rights is her life." She was raised to be an activist. She remembers making protest signs as a child—a skill she learned from her father. She passionately described her father as an integrationist and she said he taught her everything he knows. As a child **Commissioner Best** and her family

integrated a small town in Northwest Connecticut. Her experiences early on underscore the importance of having a civil rights agency to protect the public. Commissioner Best was the only black child in school and often was required to “defend Black people”. She experienced crosses being burned on her front lawn and had to protest and fight for equality in order to survive. She knows what it’s like to be treated as ‘the other’. Thus, equal rights are core for her. She began her stint as a Commissioner of the CHRO two years ago. She has vision for the Agency: that the agency be a leader around issues of civil and human rights, have inspired leadership and **“be a place of hope for the hopeless.”** She advises staff to empower the Agency by encouraging one another to focus on the mission. In addition to her social activism she also has an impressive professional background. She is the **President and CEO of the Conference of Churches** in Hartford. She has served as the **Assistant Director at the Office of Public Information with the Department of Children and Families**. She has sixteen years of experience in public policy, program development, grant management, organizational assessment, technical assistance and capacity building. She serves on various Boards and Commissions and has received awards from the Urban League, Anti-Defamation League, the Hartford Seminary, the Boys and Girls Club and Yale Divinity School. She received a Masters of Divinity from Yale Divinity School and a Masters of Art from Hartford Seminary. She rounded out her education by participating in the Harvard Leadership Institute. Her background and experience is an asset to the CHRO. Her best moment at the CHRO as she describes it, was when the

Commissioners rallied together to keep the Central Office in Hartford and she looks forward to moving the Agency in the right direction.

## CONTRACT COMPLIANCE



The Connecticut Construction Industries Association (CCIA) hosted a Contract Compliance Training Session for its members on Thurs., November 18<sup>th</sup> in Wethersfield. HRO Reps. **Susan Hom, Jeri D. Beckford, and Janice L. Cheeks** performed the training. The training session focused on **“How to Get Your Plan Approved the First Time”** and **“How to Accurately and Completely File Monthly and Quarterly Reports.”** The Contract Compliance Unit is excited about continuing its statewide outreach efforts to provide training sessions to state contractors, state subcontractors, and state vendors.

## OFFICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS



For the fiscal year to date (July 1, 2010 though November 30,

2010): The referees have conducted sixty-four conferences, four hearings in damages and three public hearings. The referees have ruled on one hundred forty six motions. Twenty-one discrimination cases and seven whistleblower cases have been closed. The total settlement figure for discrimination cases for the fiscal year to date is **\$46,500**. These settlement figures do not include the dollar amounts for settlements in confidential agreements. The superior court has dismissed one appeal of a referee decision.

## LEGAL UPDATE



**Attorney Cheryl A. Sharp** was successful in defeating a Motion to Dismiss in *CHRO ex rel. Ann and John Beaulieu v. Alyssa Peterson* where the Defendant Peterson alleged that the court lacked subject matter jurisdiction over a Section 8 housing matter. The Plaintiff, CHRO objected to the motion to dismiss asserting that the court had jurisdiction to hear the matter pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes Sections 46a-83 and 46a-89. Attorney Sharp argued that contrary to the Defendant’s position, there is no basis for the Defendant’s claim that the United States District Court has exclusive jurisdiction over the matter. Judge John A. Danaher III found that the “Defendant misunderstands the distinction between standing to bring a cause of action as opposed to the validity of the cause of action.”

**Stay Tuned for a Year in Review...**

**Next Issue**

**HAPPY HOLIDAYS**  
**HAPPY HOLIDAYS**