



NINTH ANNUAL

WEST SUBURBAN PHILANTHROPIC NETWORK

AWARDS

BUILDING PHILANTHROPY IN THE WESTERN SUBURBS

WEDNESDAY, MAY 25, 2011

ABBINGTON DISTINCTIVE BANQUETS, GLEN ELLYN

HUMANITARIAN OF THE YEAR

Bernard J. Kleina (Wheaton)

Bernard (Bernie) J. Kleina has been called an agitator and, by his own proud admission, “the most disliked man in DuPage County.” In 1968, HOPE Fair Housing Center (HOPE) was founded, and in 1970, Bernie began serving as the organization’s executive director.

Bernie believes that nonprofit work is a “calling” and his calling is to “comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.” This is especially true when the work challenges the status quo and serves those in our society who have been ignored or dismissed as unimportant.

HOPE is Illinois’ oldest fair housing center, serving 28 north and north-central counties. It’s mission is to end the hurt and devastation of housing discrimination and segregation because of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, familial status, or any other characteristics protected under state or local laws.

Each year, HOPE investigates more than 1,000 complaints of housing discrimination. Trained testers, such as one Hispanic and one white, may be sent to a housing provider to see whether they are treated differently. HOPE also provides training to housing providers, lenders, real estate agents and tenants.

Over the past 41 years, Bernie considers one of HOPE’s greatest accomplishments to be the fact that through litigation, the families who live and work at Arlington Park Race Track now have a private bathroom, air conditioning and a kitchen with running water. Everyday, HOPE resolves cases of families and individuals who come to them because they are subjected to unhealthy and unsafe apartments. Through his renowned color photographs taken in 1965 and 1966 of Dr. King and other Civil Rights leaders, along with contemporary photographs, people can come to understand the hurt and devastation of housing discrimination.

Bernie credits HOPE’s more than 75 volunteers who act as trained testers, researchers, and others who provide technical and clerical assistance as well as his five-person staff with giving their clients “hope” and a voice.

Because of his extraordinary humanitarian efforts, WSPN is honored to present Bernie Kleina with the Humanitarian of the Year Award.