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NEWS RELEASE

GREATER NEW ORLEANS FAIR HOUSING ACTION CENTER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FORMER ST. THOMAS RESIDENT IS ADMITTED TO RIVER GARDEN AFTER SHE AND FAIR HOUSING CENTER FILE LAWSUIT AGAINST THE HOUSING AUTHORITY OF NEW ORLEANS AND RIVER GARDEN APARTMENTS

Dasha Corner and the Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center (GNOFHAC) filed a lawsuit Monday, December 4, 2006 against the Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO) and LGD Rental 1, LLC, doing business as River Garden Apartments (River Garden), in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana. (Civil Action No. 06-10751). The lawsuit alleges that HANO and River Garden violated the Fair Housing Act and a 2003 Enforcement Agreement entered into between former residents of the St. Thomas public housing development, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and HANO. The Tulane Civil Litigation Clinic is representing both Ms. Corner and GNOFHAC in the federal lawsuit.

The parties reached an agreement resolving a portion of the lawsuit today in federal court, which was entered as an Order of the court by U.S. District Judge Peter Beer. This agreement will result in Ms. Corner being provided with keys and a unit at River Garden Apartments by 5 p.m. Plaintiffs' claims for damages and further injunctive relief remain.

Specifically, the lawsuit alleges that for one full year after Hurricane Katrina, HANO and River Garden leased public housing units to employees of HANO and other ineligible households, rather than to former St. Thomas residents like Ms. Corner who were in dire need of housing and who were entitled to a preference for a unit at River Garden. Despite the fact that HANO and River Garden admitted Ms. Corner prior to Hurricane Katrina, and despite Ms. Corner's repeated efforts over more than a year since Hurricane Katrina to obtain a unit at River Garden, HANO and River Garden continued to deny her a unit, instead renting the public housing units to individuals who did not have a preference to occupy the units in accordance with the 2003 Enforcement Agreement.

In addition, HANO continues to violate the Enforcement Agreement's requirements with respect to quarterly reporting, document retention, and the advertising of available units to former St. Thomas residents.

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James Perry, Executive Director of GNOFHAC, comments, "HANO and River Garden made a promise of better housing for any qualified former St. Thomas resident. That promise has not been met. Out of nearly 1,000 residents who lived at St. Thomas when it was demolished, only a small fraction have obtained housing at River Garden."

According to Morgan Williams, a Tulane Civil Litigation Clinic student who assisted Ms. Corner with her fourth application to River Garden this fall, "In the face of countless obstacles over the past fifteen months, Ms. Corner has demonstrated profound determination in her efforts to apply to River Garden Apartments, and to locate a stable home for herself and her four year old daughter."

Any other former St. Thomas residents in good standing who are interested in returning to the River Garden Apartments should contact the Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center (504) 596-2100.

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The Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center (GNOFHAC) is a private non-profit organization. The Center was established by a group of concerned New Orleanians in 1995 with the help of the National Fair Housing Alliance and a grant from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. GNOFHAC is dedicated to eliminating housing discrimination and furthering equal housing opportunities through education, outreach, advocacy, and enforcement of fair housing laws across the metro New Orleans and Baton Rouge areas.