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Severe Weather Awareness Week March 9-13

Next Meeting

Tuesday, March 17, 2009

5:30 p.m. Granny Schaffer's Restaurant

Jasper & Newton County

Emergency Management Directors

Our next meeting will be this coming Tuesday, March 17, 2009. We will have our buffet at 5:30 p.m. with our program to start at approximately 6:15 p.m. Cost of the meal is \$10 per person. Reservations are not required and guests are always welcome. Speakers this month will be Keith Stammer (Jasper Co.) and Gary Roark (Newton County) Emergency Management Directors.

Legal Forum

From Sarah Luce Reeder & Associates

Questions—Are there any laws restricting renting a house to a non-married couple? Or any possible repercussions of doing so? Thomas Gott, US Army

Answer—I believe the question would be are the applicants a protected class? For example, would denial of application be based upon race, religion, disability or age? If not, the next question would be do they qualify to rent based on income according to your guidelines. In law, a lot of times, married couples are treated as one entity. Some landlords consider their combined income to qualify. Room mates can come and go for example some landlords will not rent to multiple persons who do not qualify individually because one moves out and the whole rent shifts to other remaining. So the questions should be do they qualify under your standards due to income? Sarah Luce Reeder

Another note: Check with local ordinances. Some localities are passing ordinances on this topic.

rentlinx January Stats

16 properties listed
75 units
210 property views

Something New at our Meetings!

The Board of Directors has elected to try something new at our meetings. In an effort to obtain an outside speaker for our Association, we want to raise some money to cover the cost of having this speaker come to our group. We are offering a 50/50 Raffle. At each meeting, we will be offering tickets. The proceeds will go into a fund for procuring a speaker. We are going to split the raffle pot with a lucky member each quarter.

Starting with the February meeting, the Board members will be coming around to each table just before our featured speaker starts to distribute tickets. The rules will be as follows:

- Must be a member to participate.
- Each membership shall receive 1 (one) ticket free for attending the present meeting.
- Additional tickets will be available for \$1.00 each or 6/\$5.00.
- Member is responsible for writing the membership name on ticket and putting ticket into the draw.
- We will draw a winner each calendar quarter (March, June, September and December) at the end of

each meeting.

- Pot will be split 50/50.
- Member must be present to win.
- Association's 50% of fund shall be kept in a fund for procuring a speaker to address our Association.

This is an initial outline of how we see this working for us. We make some additions and changes as become necessary.

If you have any suggestions, comments on this, please let a Board member know.

Association Coverage Area

According to MAA, our Association covers a large area of southwest Missouri, southeast Kansas, northeast Oklahoma and northwest Arkansas. These are the counties which are in our Association's area:

Missouri: Barton, Jasper, Newton, McDonald

Kansas: Linn, Bourbon, Crawford, Cherokee

Oklahoma: Craig, Mayes, Cherokee, Ottawa, Delaware, Adair

Arkansas: Benton, Carroll

If you know someone who is a rental owner or manager or who is considering becoming an owner/manager, tell them about us and all we can do for them!

Associate/Preferred Vendor List

RentGrow—Tenant Screening

800-736-8476

First American Title Co.

417-623-1553

Apartment Finder of Springfield

Sarah Luce Reeder & Associates

RentLinX

List your properties
Here for on-line
Search of available
Housing units

Www.RentLinX.com

Southwest Missouri Rental Housing Association
Minutes of Regular Membership meeting
Tuesday, February 17, 2009 Granny Shaffer's

Meeting called to order by President David Enke

Present: 28 members, 3 guests, and 2 speakers.

Visitors Present: Russell Walker, Larry Knoblauch and Tom Mourning.

New Members Present: None.

Treasurer's Report: None available.

Membership Report as of January 6, 2009: Total-to-Date; 48/837 & 3 Associates.

Upcoming Speakers: March- Jasper/Newton County Emergency Services Directors.

Tonight's speakers were: Judge Schoeberl and Janice Franklin, Attorney with Legal Aid.

Tye Nance introduced the new 50/50 raffle our Association will have at each monthly meeting. We sold \$89.00 in tickets. Drawings will be held each quarter beginning in March. Please remember you must be present to win. The monies obtained through the raffle will be used to bring in an outside speaker.

Reminders:

Next Board meeting will be March 3, at Keller Williams office at 6:00 p.m.

Next membership meeting will be March 17, at Granny Shaffer's.

Meeting adjourned 8:15 pm.

Lyn Enke, Secretary

This publication is designed to provide informative material of interest to its readers. It is distributed with the understanding that it does not constitute legal, accounting, or other professional advertising. Although the published material is intended to be accurate, neither we nor any other party will assume liability for loss or damage as a result of reliance on this material. Appropriate legal or accounting advice or other expert assistance should be sought from a competent professional.

Any advice you may receive from any Director or Officer of the Association is simply our experience or willingness to help and is not to be construed as legal advice. Our intent is to network and to share our experiences with other members. We are not responsible for the legal content of any forms we provide our membership.

Resident Screening Trends for Independent Landlords **By Andy Cruickshank, Vice President of RentGrow, Inc.**

In the United States, it's estimated that 18 million rental units are managed by small and independent landlords. This population of landlords is continuing to grow, especially with the current influx of single family homes turning into rental properties. As times change, there are multiple rising trends in resident screening that continue to shape the rental industry. The key is to be aware of these trends and adapt with them in order to improve and safeguard your assets. In this article, we will take a look at the current trends for resident screening, specifically for independent landlords.

Accessibility of Applicant Information

Living in the age of technology, our generation has experienced an explosion of data, via the internet. It has become customary to have access to everything instantly and easily through the web, but with resident screening, while applicant information is available, the opportunity of collecting it has become an issue. Where do landlords begin to find applicant information? What service should be used? Once you determine a viable starting point, how will you access it? What guidelines have to be followed in order to access personal information? The obstacles can be many creating a tedious and time-consuming, resulting in wasted time and energy. Finding convenience and reliability in resident screening means you've found the right solution.

Deteriorating Pool of Qualified Applicants

Over the past decade, a growing concern for landlords is the decreasing pool of qualified applicants. Landlords surveyed across the country agree that the "quality of applicants is not what it used to be." You can forget about the days where landlords could rely on intuition and first impressions alone, as a predictor of who's a "good" renter. Today, landlords are looking for a broader and deeper perspective on each applicant bringing forth multiple data elements that include: eviction, criminal, national sex offender registry, address search, social security fraud checks, as well as a credit evaluation. This qualified pool of applicants is likely to continue to deteriorate as the U.S. economic environment worsens with job losses and foreclosures.

Rise in Criminal Background Checks

More than five years ago RentGrow customers screened less than 50% of every 100 tenant applicants for criminal background checks. Today 85% of people processing credit checks are also running criminal background checks, confirming that criminal background checks are a growing priority, while raising a concern of "how" to access that information. Today, small landlords have limited sources to collect criminal data, experiencing an overall lack of detailed information. Landlords start by contacting local police stations or making visits to courthouses or state buildings. This amounts to a tedious, time-consuming process with a narrow range of information and often incomplete information. If an applicant was convicted of a crime outside of the county being searched, the results will not show up. Due to the increase of states putting forth criminal information and data online, it is becoming easier to collect accurate, up-to-date information, increasing the trend of using criminal screening as a main data point on applicants. Resident screening is taking a step towards a comprehensive solution that doesn't focus purely on credit evaluations.

Rise in the “Shadow” Rental Marketplace

A growing industry concern is the “shadow” rental marketplace, which is when homeowners are unable, or unwilling, to sell their homes in the current residential real estate market and instead opt to rent it. Rather than taking a loss in the sale of a home, some homeowners are seeking to wait for the real estate market to stabilize and rebound before selling. A recent study by the National MultiHousing Council (NMHC) stated that, almost 1 million U.S. single family homes and condominiums are available in the U.S. This quantity of vacant residences is beyond normal standards and likely to grow to an excess of 2 million, with the current economic climate. For the foreseeable future, independent landlords will continue to compete with the homeowners of this growing “shadow” rental market.

Limited Access to Full Credit Report Information

With the increased instances of fraud and identity theft in the U.S., credit bureaus are tightening access to full credit reports and personal information. The window of accessibility is continuing to shrink, due to laws and regulations seeking to further protect personal information of U.S. citizens. For landlords to receive full credit reports and personal information they must comply with permissible purpose laws. Under these laws, credit bureaus require that you have a separate office, identified as a “business” office, which requires an on-site inspection from an authorized third compliance firm.

Meeting prospective tenants at rental property sites does not count as a business office. To be considered a “business” office, you must have a designated room containing securable cabinetry to protect sensitive information and it must be a separate meeting place for clients. On top of that, you must have a proper way of disposing sensitive information (e.g. paper shredder) in order to protect your tenant’s privacy. If you fail to meet their requirements your privileges to accessing full credit reports will be revoked. A resident screening provider will keep you aligned with new and existing laws and regulations.

Additionally, as of November 1, 2008 the “Red Flag” rule was enforced, stating that sensitive information must be kept secure to prevent identity theft and a discrepancy in an address could indicate fraud. The rule requires that “reasonable” policies be in place to prevent identity theft and to verify a person’s identity when an address discrepancy is reported. In the case of address discrepancy, if the property manager can’t work out the discrepancy, the rule says he/she is not to rent to this individual.

While the rule has caused some confusion, compliance is straightforward. The only thing that rental owners or property managers have to show is that they have a “reasonable” process in place for preventing identity theft and for checking IDs, verifying IDs, and following up/asking about any discrepancies.

Be In the Know

Changes are constant within the landlord and independent rental owner marketplace and as we move towards better “availability” of information and a tightening of “who” can access it, it is more important than ever to adapt to the latest trends and services that continue to shape the multifamily industry. It’s time to join the movement and trust the experts, with an absolute, top-notch resident screening solution.

ScreeningWorks, a service of RentGrow Inc., is a member of this association and is currently offering association members a 10% discount off their tenant screening services. For more information about this article or ScreeningWorks services please go to www.ScreeningWorks.com or contact ScreeningWorks customer service at 888-401-7999.

**SOUTHWEST
MISSOURI RENTAL
HOUSING
ASSOCIATION**

P O Box 1801
Joplin, MO 64802-1801

Phone: 417-781-3337
E-mail: info@swmorental.com



'NO CALL' LIST

You may sign up for the Missouri Attorney General's "No Call" List. Call toll-free 1-866-NOCALL1 or log on to:

www.moago.org.

3/3/09
Current Membership
Count:
49 Members Managing
858 Properties
4 Associate Members

Each member of this Association shall:

- Strive continually to promote the education and fraternity of the membership and to promote the progress and dignity of the apartment/rental housing industry.
- Maintain and operate our apartment/rental housing projects in accordance with fair practices and in compliance with the By-Laws of the Association.
- Promote and maintain a high standard of integrity in the performance of all rental obligations and services in the operation of our apartment/rental housing projects.
- Establish high ethical standard of conduct with suppliers and other doing business with the apartment/rental housing industry.
- Endeavor to expose all schemes to misleads or defraud the apartment/rental housing residing public and to aid in the exposure of those responsible.
- Seek to provide better values in apartment/rental housing.

Purpose

- The purpose of this Association shall be:
- To advance the general welfare of the rental housing industry.
- To participate for the purpose of mutual benefit in an interchange of information and experience with all state and local affiliated associations of the National Apartment Association.
- To encourage within the apartment/rental housing industry a high appreciation of the objectives and responsibilities of apartment/rental housing owners and operators in providing adequate privately owned housing.
- To promote the enactment and enforcement of local, state and federal laws beneficial to the apartment/rental housing industry and free enterprise.
- To disseminate useful information to all members and inspire them to further educate themselves in the practical features of their apartment/rental housing operations.
- To advocate a code of ethics to maintain high professional standards and sound business methods among its members for the best interests of the industry and the public.

Upcoming Events and Dates to Remember

March 17 regular membership meeting 5:30 p.m. at Granny Schaffer's Restaurant.

May 5 Board of Directors meeting at Keller/Williams Realty, 7th & St. Louis, Joplin, 6:00 p.m.

June 16 regular membership meeting 5:30 p.m. at Granny Schaffer's Restaurant.

April 7 Board of Directors meeting at Keller/Williams Realty, 7th & St. Louis, Joplin, 6:00 p.m.

May 19 regular membership meeting 5:30 p.m. at Granny Schaffer's Restaurant.

July 7 Board of Directors meeting at Keller/Williams Realty, 7th & St. Louis, Joplin 6:00 p.m.

April 21 regular membership meeting 5:30 p.m. at Granny Schaffer's Restaurant.

June 2 Board of Directors meeting at Keller/Williams Realty, 7th & St. Louis, Joplin, 6:00 p.m.

July 21 regular membership meeting 5:30 p.m. at Granny Schaffer's Restaurant.