



For Immediate Release

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Equal Rights Center and National Restaurant Chain Così Reach Agreement to Make Restaurants More Accessible

WASHINGTON, D.C., February 24, 2010 – The Equal Rights Center (ERC), a national non-profit civil rights organization, Donna Sims, and Così, Inc., a national restaurant chain, announced today their agreement and initiative to make Così restaurants more accessible to people with disabilities.

“The Equal Rights Center applauds Così for opening its doors to all patrons and agreeing to make its restaurants more accessible for customers with disabilities,” said Don Kahl, Executive Director of the Equal Rights Center.

Così CEO and President, James Hyatt, stated, “Così remains committed to actively providing a welcoming atmosphere to customers with disabilities. Così is a restaurant that believes ‘life should be delicious’—for everyone.”

The parties’ agreement resolves a federal lawsuit brought by the ERC and Sims after Sims, an ERC member who uses a wheelchair, was unable to enter a Così in Washington D.C., and after an ERC’s review of other Così restaurants identified accessibility issues.

As a result of the parties’ agreement, Così will survey its restaurants to determine accessibility and make necessary modifications to insure that the restaurants comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and state or local laws addressing the rights of people with disabilities. Così will also implement policies aimed at improving accessibility, will provide ADA training to staff, and will pay the ERC and Sims for damages and attorneys’ fees incurred in the matter.

“Così has demonstrated its commitment to the happiness and wellbeing of all its customers by agreeing to take the necessary steps to make their restaurant more accessible,” said Elaine Gardner, Disability Rights Project Director at the Washington Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs.

Both Sims and the Equal Rights Center were represented in this matter by the Washington Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights & Urban Affairs and the law firm of Foley and Lardner.

Così was represented in this matter by the law firm, Wiley Rein, LLP.

About the Equal Rights Center (www.equalrightscenter.org)

Since 1983, the Equal Rights Center (ERC), a national non-profit civil rights organization, has worked to identify, challenge, and eliminate discrimination. The ERC combats discrimination in housing, employment, access to public accommodations and government services, disability rights and immigrant rights, through education and outreach, research, testing, counseling, advocacy and enforcement.

About the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs (<http://www.washlaw.org>)

The Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs was established in 1968 to provide pro bono legal services to address issues of discrimination and entrenched poverty. Since its founding, the Committee has handled more than 5,000 cases on behalf of individuals and advocacy organizations in the areas of equal employment, fair housing, public accommodations, public education, asylum and refugee rights, and disability rights. For more information about the Committee, see www.washlaw.org. The Committee can be reached at 202.319.1000.