

Twenty years on the front line

Time flies when you are in the business of serving the HIV/AIDS community, but it still seems remarkable to us that the AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania has been in this business for two decades. This year marks the 20th anniversary of our founding, and while our work and challenges go on, we plan to embrace this milestone -- and we hope you will join us.

Two big events are in the works -- the movie party coming up June 20 and a Nov. 20 extravaganza that also salutes the AIDS-focused film *Philadelphia* (details on Page 6). But an anniversary like this also is a time to pay tribute to our clients -- 30,000 of them over the years -- and to reflect on what these 20 years of service have meant to Pennsylvania's HIV/AIDS community. We are fortunate to have many comrades in the fight to assist and protect the rights of people with HIV/AIDS.

One such supporter is state Sen. Shirley M. Kitchen (D-Philadelphia), a member of the Senate's Public Health and Welfare Committee, before which Executive Director **Ronda B. Goldfein, Esq.**, testified May 14 (see Message from the Executive Director, Page 2). The senator welcomed Goldfein before her testimony and, in an interview later, reflected on the AIDS Law Project's efforts.

"You guys rate very high in my book," said Sen. Kitchen, who has worked hand-in-hand with the AIDS Law Project ever since she was the Philadelphia City Council's director of constituent services under then council president John F. Street.

The senator, who is known for fighting on behalf of the poor, said that because poor people are the ones who overwhelmingly suffer the worst stigma of HIV, "I see a big need for you all and what you do."

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The Philadelphia Inquirer New AIDS law center here moves quickly into action

By Vernon Loeb
Inquirer Staff Writer

Civil rights attorneys are expected to file suit today in U.S. District Court alleging that Lankenau Hospital violated a patient's rights last year by requiring her to undergo an AIDS test and then denying her services after she tested positive for the virus.

The attorneys, David W. Webber and Julie Shapiro, said yesterday that they would also be filing admin-

for refusing to treat patients who have tested positive for the AIDS virus, known as human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

Webber and Shapiro said they were filing the suits in conjunction with the formation of the AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania. The nonprofit legal center, based at 924 Cherry St., was created to try to establish legal precedents defining the rights of those who have AIDS or have tested

The AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania makes its first big news on the front page of the *Inquirer*, Oct. 18, 1988.

Alliance with Drexel to provide an infusion of law students

Philadelphia's newest law school, the Drexel University Earle Mack School of Law, and the AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania have launched a partnership that will benefit the AIDS Law Project's clients while training Drexel law students.

The partnership was formalized in a memorandum of understanding, signed on May 2 by the AIDS Law Project and Drexel law school representatives, designating the AIDS Law Project a "field clinic" where eight third-year law students will get hands-on experience representing clients.

The agreement's terms call for Drexel to pay the AIDS Law Project \$155,000 over three years for attorney supervision of students as

well as technology and other infrastructure necessary to support the students' ability to represent AIDS Law Project clients. The field clinic will open its doors in September.

"This agreement recognizes the quality of the work the AIDS Law Project does by giving us the resources to provide even better service to more clients in the next few years," says Deputy Managing Attorney **Cathryn Miller-Wilson** who will be the students' supervisor.

"It also ensures that the next generation of lawyers is well-prepared to meet the challenge of facing issues that are legally cutting-edge and of far-reaching importance to the communities in which they will eventually practice," she added. "It's a win-win situation for everyone, particularly for the 1,600 people a year with HIV/AIDS who depend upon us for access to health care, housing and civil liberties."

Three second-year Drexel co-op students worked with the AIDS Law Project during the academic year of 2007-08 and gave glowing reports of their mentoring and real responsibilities to their peers and professors. One of those co-op students, Danielle

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The AIDS Law Project and Drexel University Earle Mack School of Law celebrate a new partnership (from left): Deputy Managing Attorney Kathryn Miller-Wilson, law student Zoe Pierhoples, Associate Dean Susan Brooks and law students Meryl Katz and Danielle Mourar. The students' co-op experience encouraged the alliance.

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Good Counsel is published semiannually by the AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania for our friends, volunteers and colleagues committed to protecting the rights of people with HIV/AIDS.

The AIDS Law Project works on almost 2,200 legal matters a year, nearly all from people with HIV/AIDS, many of whom have nowhere else to turn for help. We help people navigate the legal system, the welfare system, the housing system and the worlds of public and private insurance. We provide education and training to thousands of professionals who work with people with HIV/AIDS.

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Friends:

As we reported in Good Counsel (Fall 2006), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced guidelines in September 2006 calling for expanded access to HIV testing. The CDC proposed that all patients should be notified that testing will be performed unless the patient declines -- a system called opt-out screening -- and that separate written consent for HIV testing should not be required.

These recommendations conflict with Pennsylvania's Act 148, which contains clear requirements for HIV testing -- pretest counseling, written informed consent and face-to-face, post-test counseling. In response to the CDC's recommendations, two bills recently were introduced in the Pennsylvania Legislature to amend Act 148.

Senate Bill 1261 provides for opt-out testing and eliminates Act 148's requirement that a patient sign an informed-consent form. House Bill 2465 allows health-care providers to test a pregnant woman and children of HIV-positive women, unlike other patients, without pretest counseling, written informed consent or post-test counseling. The bill essentially exempts pregnant women from Act 148's informed consent, test notification and counseling, and related provisions.

On May 14, state Sen. Edwin Erickson, the sponsor of Senate Bill 1261 and chair of the Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee, convened a public hearing at which I was invited to testify. On behalf of the AIDS Law Project and the HIV Policy Collaborative of Pennsylvania, I testified that a critical step in reducing the transmission of HIV is for people with HIV to know they are infected and for HIV testing to be offered and readily available to anyone at risk. These efforts, however, will be successful only if we continue to protect the rights of patients to make their own decisions about HIV testing.

We oppose Senate Bill 1261 and House Bill 2465, because they disregard the value of patient involvement in HIV health-care decision-making. House Bill 2465 is particularly egregious because it exempts a woman from the protections of a state law if she becomes pregnant.

Informed consent is a fundamental element of all health care. I understand the frustrations of health-care providers who want to increase HIV testing for their patients, but eliminating informed consent is not the answer.

Without the requirement of written informed consent, some patients may not receive an explanation of the test, why it's appropriate, or even that they have been tested until the results come back. Without proof of informed consent, patient involvement in testing and treatment decisions will be diminished and we will have taken a giant step backward in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

AIDS prevention occurs when people are encouraged to take responsibility for their own decisions.

Remember us at workplace giving time.

When you donor-designate in your workplace giving campaign, remember your neighbors served by the AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania.

United Way of SE PA Specific Care Option #09067
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Pride Law Fund backs pilot medical- legal partnership

A medical-legal partnership to enhance advocacy efforts on behalf of clients is the latest AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania pilot program to win support in the form of a \$4,500 grant.

Since last fall, **Danielle Mourar**, a second-year law student at Drexel University Earle Mack School of Law, has had a co-op placement with the AIDS Law Project testing a medical-legal partnership. Thanks to the Steven Richter Fellowship of the Pride Law Fund, she will be continuing and expanding upon her work through the summer while documenting the project for publication in legal and/or AIDS journals and developing materials on replicating the program elsewhere.

The idea behind the partnership is that much of the AIDS Law Project's advocacy depends on obtaining persuasive supportive medical documentation to gain client benefits. To enhance the effectiveness of our efforts, the Jonathan Lax Treatment Center of Philadelphia FIGHT has permitted Mourar to come to the Lax Center's office once per week. While there, she functions as both an advocate for clients and as a trainer for medical providers whose timely and persuasive input is vital to the success of Mourar's advocacy efforts.

Living with HIV can be difficult, but when you are an otherwise healthy 27-year-old, freewheeling single guy the transition to full-time custodial father of three kids aged 8, 6 and 4 can be an even greater challenge.

The new role was thrust upon John Doe suddenly the afternoon the police called him to say that his ex-wife had been arrested. Nevertheless, John took up his new responsibilities with maturity and set about providing for his children's needs. One of his first stops was at the local Department of Public Welfare (DPW), where he attempted to sign up his brood to receive food stamps.

As custodial single fathers are rare, the clerk he dealt with assumed that John was pulling some sort of a scam – despite the fact that he showed up with the kids in tow. Looking at John's paperwork, the clerk declared that John's custody order, signed in 2007 when the ex-wife was briefly hospitalized, was too old to be valid. Next the clerk pointed out that the ex-wife had a pending application for the children in another district and no new application could be filed until that one was closed.

John saw that the system was against him and called upon the AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania to cut the red tape. The call came in on a Friday afternoon after intake hours but got handled immediately as an emergency by Public Benefits Paralegal **Tyler Griswold**.

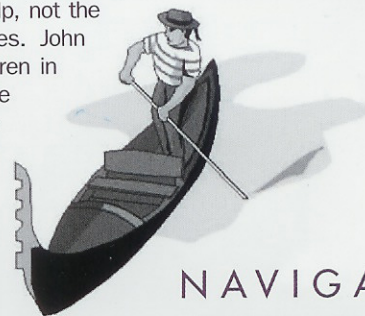
Tyler first got a DPW supervisor on the telephone and vouched for John's story. Based on that, the supervisor authorized an emergency disbursement of individual benefits to John to get the family through the weekend.

On Monday morning, Tyler placed calls to DPW supervisors in the ex-wife's and John's districts that resulted in the ex-wife's applications being closed and expedited applications for the children being opened. Tyler also clarified the rules concerning custody orders to John's district supervisor's satisfaction and got the office to recognize John as the custodial parent.

Until this time, John had never really needed the service of a case manager. Tyler suggested though, that with the children in his life, one could be useful in the future, and John agreed. Tyler then referred John to a city-run service that provides case managers.

John and his family are now on their way to a new life together with the help, not the hindrance, of local social services. John recently re-enrolled the older children in school, which they had missed while living with their mother, and is looking into day care for the youngest so that he can go back to work.

With the AIDS Law Project and a case manager to back him up, John is returning to his prior self-sufficiency with three additional futures to plan.



NAVIGATING
THE SYSTEM

HOW ONE MAN'S MONEY WOES LED TO HEALTH-COST SAVINGS

Mr. P came to the AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania seeking to file for bankruptcy because after paying \$583 a month on health care, he was unable to cover the rest of his bills. His consumer-finance case was assigned to Deputy Managing Attorney **Cathryn Miller-Wilson**, who examined Mr. P's expenses and discovered that his medical costs, including insurance premiums and prescription drugs, were unnecessarily high. Believing that Mr. P. was eligible for some public benefits, Cathryn pulled in Public Benefits Attorney **Asha Ramachandran** to help him on a second front.

Asha quickly determined that, although Mr. P had private group health insurance through his former employer and Medicare, much of Mr. P's monthly health care expenses were for costs that the private insurance and Medicare would not cover. She knew that if she enrolled Mr. P in a Medicare Supplement plan, she could save him the cost of his share of his doctor visits and hospitalizations. Even though the plan would cost him around \$150 a month, it would still be a great savings over his current expenses.

But that idea didn't work. By the time Asha was ready to enroll him, his group insurance coverage had ended because he was late on his premiums. Medicare regulations would only allow him to enroll in a Medicare Supplement plan if he did so within 63 days of his group coverage ending.

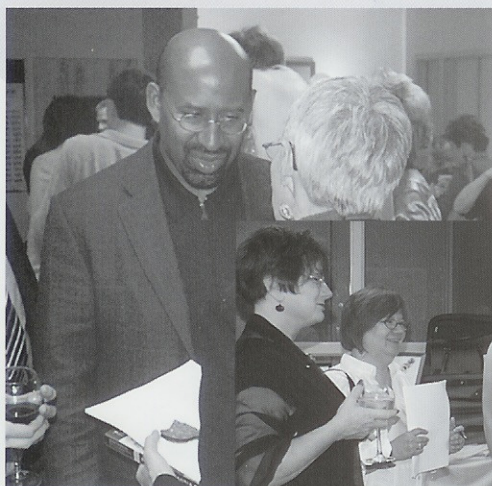
Luckily, Asha knew an insurance broker who knew a loophole to this rule: If Mr. P enrolled in a Medicare Advantage plan for 90 days, he would then be permitted to enroll in the Medicare Supplement plan. Unfortunately, the Medicare Advantage plan open enrollment period did not begin until November, for coverage beginning January 2008. In November, Asha enrolled Mr. P in a Medicare Advantage plan. After Mr. P had been in that plan for 90 days, he terminated it and enrolled in Medicare Savings Plan.

Thanks to Cathryn's thoughtful assessment and Asha's careful planning and tenacity, Mr. P's health-care costs have been reduced by about \$100 a month. For Mr. P, it is a relief to know exactly what his monthly medical expenses will be and that they fit into his budget. He now has the peace of mind that comes from knowing that he can pay his bills and be covered if he falls sick.

Emcee Art Fennell (upper right), anchor of "Art Fennell Reports" on CN8, and James McBride (right) cajole and thank supporters.

James McBride concert and auction raise \$43,000 for the AIDS Law Project

James McBride, saxophonist and author of the international best seller *The Color of Water* and the acclaimed *Song Yet Sung*, his latest novel, performed with his jazz band on Oct. 27 for the benefit of the AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania at the Philadelphia Clef Club. A reception and silent auction were held before the show and during the intermission. Altogether, the evening's proceeds totaled more than \$43,000. Thanks to all who helped make this the AIDS Law Project's most successful fund-raiser of the year. (James McBride will put on a repeat performance at an event this fall commemorating the AIDS Law Project's 20th anniversary that will feature the cast and crew of the movie Philadelphia. See Page 6 for details.)



Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter (above).



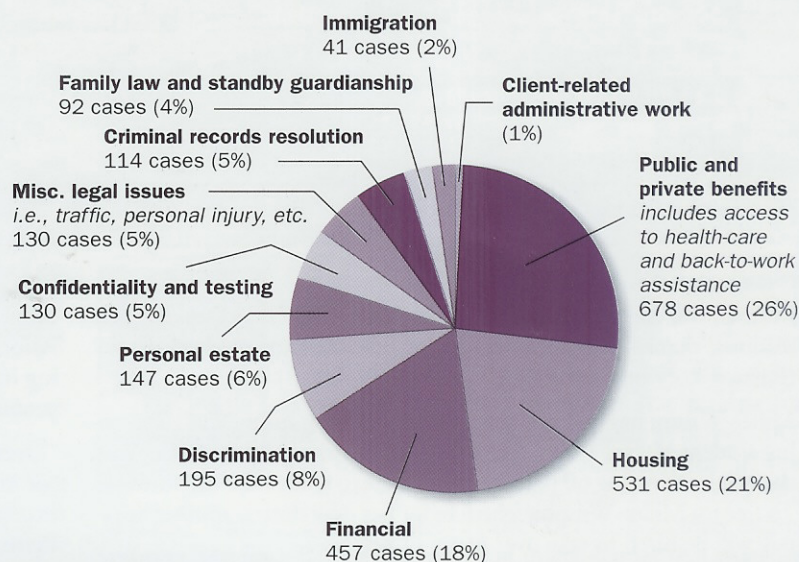
Photo by Harris Sklar



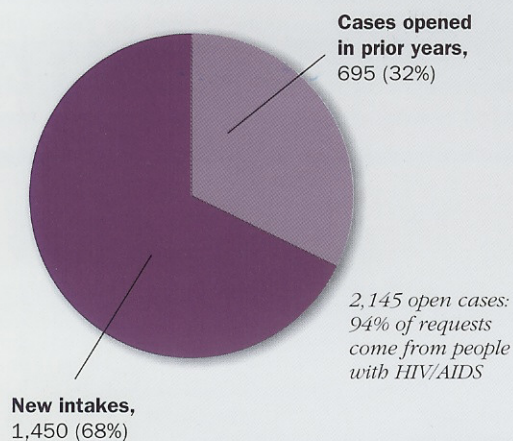
TYPES OF SERVICES REQUESTED

Legal Services for 2007

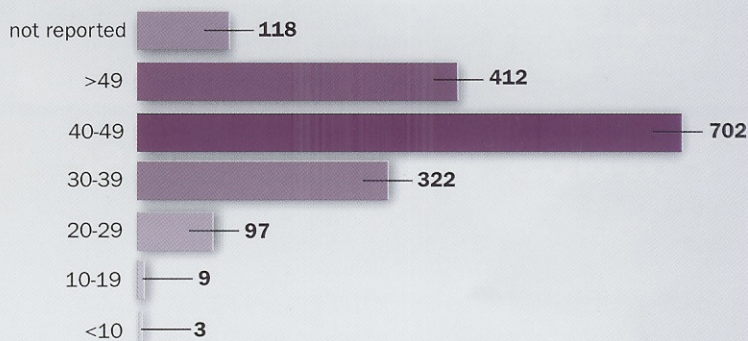
We helped 1,663 clients
with 2,145 legal matters.



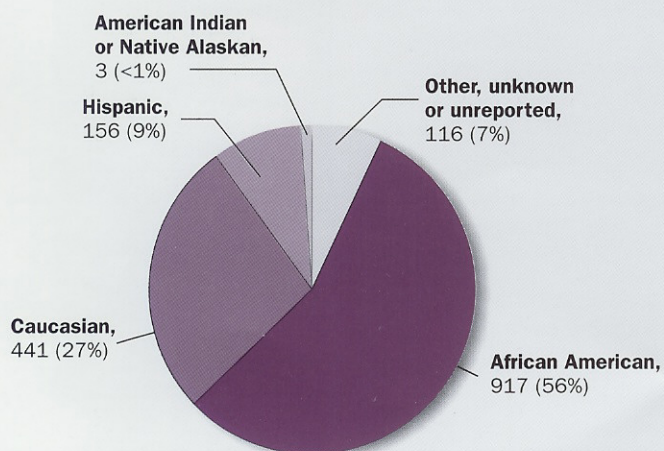
OUR ANNUAL WORKLOAD



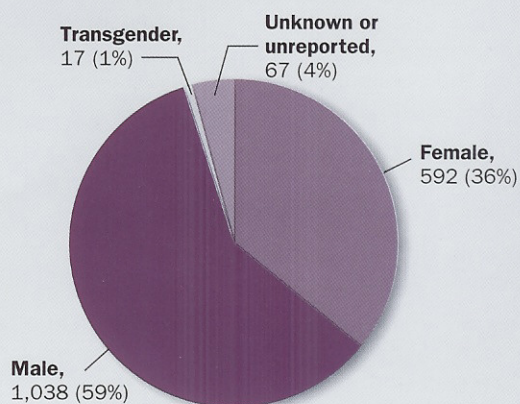
CLIENTS BY AGE



RACE AND ETHNICITY



CLIENTS BY GENDER



Training at a glance

TRAINEE DEMOGRAPHICS		January - March 2008 Training Statistics
300 Students, by category	Locations	Sponsors
Undergraduates	Philadelphia Danville, PA Middletown, PA	AIDS Activity Coordinating Office of the Philadelphia Department of Health Drexel University Temple University Philadelphia Health Federation
113 Professionals, including		
Nurses Case managers		

In the first quarter of 2008, the AIDS Law Project spent 40 hours training on AIDS-related legal issues.

Continued from page 1

Mourar, will continue her work at the AIDS Law Project through the summer, thanks to the Steven Richter Fellowship of the Pride Fund. (Related story on Page 3.)

Miller-Wilson has had primary responsibility for hiring and supervising student interns for the last four years. Under the new agreement, she will be devoting 60 percent of her time to work with the students. To free up Miller-Wilson's schedule for her new duties, another attorney will be hired to take over many of her cases.

On a weekly basis, students joining the AIDS Law Project will handle telephone and walk-in cases and attend the Monday-afternoon staff meeting at which new cases are discussed and assigned. Under Pennsylvania rules, third-year law students can be certified to make court appearances and give legal advice. Each student will specialize in a substantive area such as housing or benefits and will work closely with the relevant staff attorneys in addition to Miller-Wilson.

Drexel's college of law received provisional accreditation less than 18 months after opening, the shortest time allowed under American Bar Association rules. Such accreditation means that all students graduating in 2009 and beyond will be able to sit for the bar exam and enter professional practice.

"Drexel Law has an innovative approach to preparing graduates for the legal profession," said Susan Brooks, associate dean for experiential learning, citing co-op placements of second-year students from the Class of 2009 in more than 100 law firms, businesses, courts and public-interest organizations in addition to pro bono work as "real-life training for real-life legal practice."

"The AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania is our first civil law Field Clinic from the many wonderful legal services providers in the Philadelphia legal community," added the dean, who said that in making that decision the school considered such factors as the quality of supervision and the educational impact of the amount and kind of work students were allowed to do in their placements.

Parties with a purpose

Mark your calendar now for two fund-raising events, one in June, the other in November.

9th Summer Movie Party, Friday, June 20

Philly's coolest summer fundraiser returns to Rittenhouse Square's hippest offices thanks to **Digitas Health**, 229 S. 18th St. Join us at 6 p.m. for beer, wine and **Kim Silverman's** legendary buffet. At 7:30 p.m., Secret Cinema's **Jay Schwartz** rolls *Soul Hustler*, a 1976 potboiler starring '50s teen idol **Fabian** as a con-man evangelist running wild in Southern California. Get all this and a cornucopia of socializing for a minimum donation of \$20. Call 215.587.9377 today to sponsor or reserve.

Art and life converge for AIDS Law Project's 20th Anniversary Gala

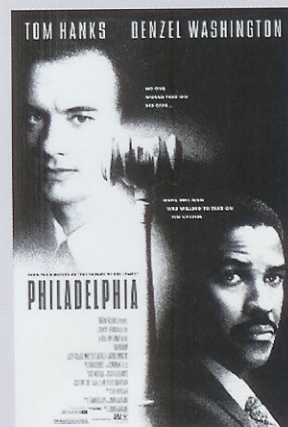
Jonathan Demme, award-winning director of the film *Philadelphia*, will take center stage at the AIDS Law Project's 20th Anniversary Gala on Thursday, November 20.

Released 15 years ago, *Philadelphia* was the first major motion picture to tackle the topic of AIDS discrimination. At the gala, Demme will hold a series of short conversations with members of the cast and crew of *Philadelphia* that will consider the film's impact on the public's awareness of the AIDS epidemic and how it challenged popular stereotypes about people living with AIDS.

The evening will continue with a rousing jazz concert from multitalented author and musician **James McBride** and his band, who will be making their fourth annual appearance to benefit the AIDS Law Project.

Pennsylvania **Gov. Edward G. Rendell** has lent his name to the affair as the honorary chair. Demme and McBride have generously donated their time to the event.

Sponsors will enjoy a private reception with Demme and McBride before the event. Call Naomi Geschwind at 215.587.9377 for information on sponsorship opportunities at this one-of-a-kind evening! For more details, visit www.aidslawpa.org.



She also pointed out that while some issues have changed over the course of the epidemic, others – such as housing – continue to pose legal challenges that require “people who can’t make a good enough case for themselves” to turn to the AIDS Law Project.

“If people ever say that nothing is making a difference,” she said, “I tell them to look at the AIDS Law Project. I talk about you all the time. Folks don’t talk about good things enough.”

Longtime client and AIDS activist Heshie Zinman agreed. “People need to understand that the Law Project is incredibly important in the scheme of agencies dealing with AIDS.”

Pointing out that most AIDS service organizations deal with physical concerns such as food, clothing and shelter, Zinman said, “The Law Project is really an incredible advocate for a whole range of needs that don’t look like food, clothing and shelter but lead to food, clothing and shelter.”

Care for people with HIV/AIDS is available, said Zinman, “but, it’s hard to access.”

“Government, insurance companies, doctors versus the little guy is ‘Big Brother’ stuff and it’s intimidating, and I’m a pretty intelligent guy with resources,” said Zinman, the founder of the AIDS Library. “For people who haven’t been as fortunate as I, it’s just got to be overwhelming.”

So, Zinman tells his friends what his friend -- and another longtime client -- Ed Bomba told him in 2003 when his first HIV-related legal issue arose: “You don’t even stand a chance without the Law Project.”

TAKE A SEMINAR, TAKE CONTROL

Life can be a little easier with the right information at your fingertips. Our AIDS and the law experts give you the real lowdown on how to leave your job, go back to work or handle your landlord. These free seminars are held at the AIDS Law Project offices at 1211 Chestnut St., Suite 600.

Back to Work

Your medications are working and you’re ready to get a job. This seminar covers the rules of returning to work so you won’t lose the benefits that got you healthier in the first place. You’ll also learn how to improve your credit rating with your new income.

Second Tuesday of the month, noon-2 p.m.

July 8	Aug. 12	Sept. 9
Oct. 14	Nov. 11	Dec. 9

Leaving Your Job

Making a smooth transition from the working world onto disability takes planning. This seminar lays out a step-by-step timeline so you know what to expect when it’s time to make the move. You’ll also learn how to avoid some of the common debt pitfalls leaving a job can entail and how to handle the debt you may take with you into retirement.

Second Wednesday of the month, noon-2 p.m.

July 9	Aug. 13	Sept. 10
Oct. 8	Nov. 12	Dec. 10

Housing: Tenants’ Rights and Responsibilities

Before you sign a lease or make a security deposit, learn what to expect of your landlord and what your landlord can legally expect of you. This program covers protecting and retrieving your deposits, record keeping, qualifying for subsidies, dealing with utilities, and all aspects of the landlord/tenant court process.

Second Thursday of the month, noon-2p.m.

July 10	Aug. 14	Sept. 11
Oct. 9	Nov. 13	Dec. 11

Changes...

At its March meeting, the AIDS Law Project board elevated **Joann Leszczynsky** to the post of vice president. Joann has been very active with the Fundraising Committee and has put in many hours on our annual movie party, concert-night silent auction and other efforts.

Bilingual paralegal **Carlos Munoz**, who joined the AIDS Law Project in 2004 and worked on housing and benefits, takes on a new challenge now as the criminal records resolution paralegal. In his new role Carlos will be helping clients clear outstanding warrants so that they will be eligible for a full array of public benefits.

Welcome new staffer



Samarjeet Wable joined the AIDS Law Project at the end of November 2007 as our housing paralegal. Samarjeet graduated in 2007 from Temple University, where he studied philosophy. A certified Scholastic Aptitude Test teacher for the Princeton Review, Samarjeet proctors SAT tests on weekends when he and his guitar are not performing at local open mikes as “Cody and Akhmed.” In what spare time he has after all that, Samarjeet enjoys volunteering for Kiva, an international micro-lender that matches individuals with entrepreneurs in developing nations.

Congratulations

Congratulations to two members of the AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania family.

We salute **Managing Attorney Yolanda French Lollis** on having been named one of “100 Influential Black Women in Philadelphia” by the Women in the NAACP division of the Philadelphia NAACP.

Winners were feted at a gala dinner on March 30 at First District Plaza. Yolanda attended with her husband, Kent Lollis, and sons, Alexander and Jordan. Executive Director **Ronda B. Goldfein**, also attended with board member **Avi Eden**.

Board member **Harris J. Sklar, Esq.**, an accomplished photographer, was one of only 36 artists from a field of more than 544 entrants to have a work selected in the Print Center’s 82nd Annual International Competition: Photography. Harris’ photo, taken on Washington’s Olympic Peninsula, is on display with the other winners through Aug. 2 at the Print Center, 1614 Latimer St. Good shooting, Harris.

Thanks for the help

The AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania extends its thanks to the three second-year Drexel University law students who did co-op work/study in our offices over the past few months. They were **Meryl Katz**, **Danielle Mourar** and **Zoe Plerhoples**. In addition, the administrative staff appreciated all the filing done by **Sierra Hill** of Samuel S. Fels High School in Philadelphia.

... and bid farewell

The AIDS Law Project gratefully extends its warmest wishes to departing board members **Kimberly Y. Chainey, Esq.**, **Bruce Flannery** and **Nancy Molock**.

Best wishes for future success go out to **Bradley Lenora**, who departed for the private sector in November.

We are very proud of our AIDS Law Project alums and wish them all the best of luck! They will remain a part of our extended AIDS Law Project family.

THANKS TO OUR FUNDERS AND DONORS

Gifts received Oct. 16, 2007, through April 15, 2008

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