

RONDA GOLDFEIN TAKES HELM AT AIDS LAW PROJECT

IT'S WORKPLACE GIVING TIME!

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

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Good Counsel is published seasonally by the AIDS Law Project for our friends, volunteers and colleagues committed to protecting the rights of people with HIV and AIDS. The AIDS Law Project provides free legal services to nearly 1,800 people with HIV/AIDS each year, most of whom are low-income and 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 AIDS.

Ronda B. Goldfein, Esq., the AIDS Law Project's new executive director, well remembers the cold, abrupt way a longtime friend learned he had HIV disease. He had gone for routine blood work to prepare for minor plastic surgery, was tested for HIV without his knowledge, then got a phone call saying: "Your appointment is cancelled. You have HIV. Good luck."

It was more than a decade ago, and Ronda had been working in large law firms doing personal injury defense, first in New York and then in Wilmington. But the work was unfulfilling, and in 1992 she quit to do some soul searching.

About that time, Ronda saw a notice in the paper: The AIDS Law Project was hosting a brown-bag lunch to recruit volunteer attorneys. Ronda attended the event, and soon began volunteering, handling intake calls and representing clients, working alongside the agency's two full-time staff members.

"Almost immediately, I felt this was what I needed to do. This was a real connection to people's lives," recalls Ronda, who recently was appointed to the agency's top job after Nan Feyler resigned to pursue academic interests.

"It was clear to me," adds Ronda, "that there is an ebb and flow to life, that we all need help at some point, and the person who needs help today may be able to help someone else tomorrow. And that's what it means to be in a community."



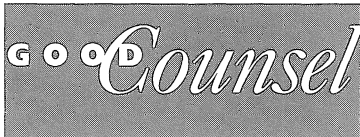
Ronda also was drawn to the cutting-edge nature of the work. "These were issues the law had not addressed yet. The needs of clients were changing every day as the illness was unfolding around us. We were really part of a moment."

Since those early months of volunteer work, Ronda has become recognized through appearances in national magazines and seminars and has helped steer the AIDS Law Project into the forefront of AIDS advocacy. She is widely regarded as a tenacious lawyer who gets results for her clients with HIV and AIDS.

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Breaking News!

As we go to press, we've just learned that the AIDS Law Project has received a renewed challenge grant from the Independence Foundation. Details to come.



NEWSLETTER OF THE
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PENNSYLVANIA

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*This newsletter is lovingly dedicated
to the memory of AIDS Law Project
Board Members Michael Greenberg and
Jonathan Lax, Intake Advocate
Arnold Jackson and VISTA Volunteers
Gary Bailey and David Bertugli.*

*If you know someone who would like to
receive a copy or need to let us know of
an address change, please call Martha
McDonald, editor, at 215.587.9377.*

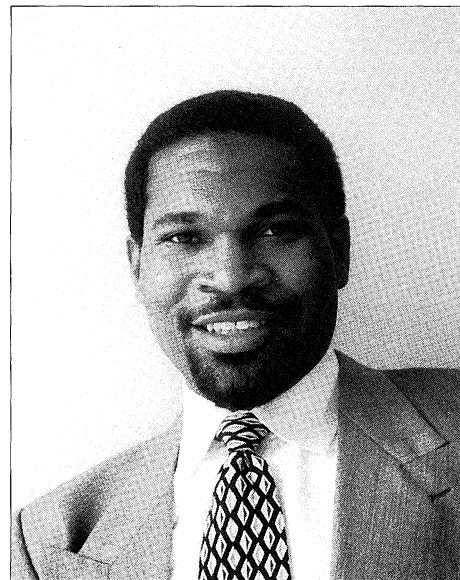
William Penn Awards Major Grant for Standby Guardianship Initiative

The William Penn Foundation recently awarded an \$82,000 grant to support the AIDS Law Project's Standby Guardianship Initiative, an intensive public awareness, education and training program to help parents with HIV/AIDS make legally secure plans for their children's future care.

The program was developed to get the word out about the custody options now available to parents with HIV/AIDS through the new Pennsylvania **Standby Guardianship Act**.

As previously reported in *Good Counsel*, the AIDS Law Project helped get this law passed early last year. The law allows a terminally ill parent to name a trusted relative or caregiver as legal guardian before the parent becomes ill, so that the guardian will be available on "stand by" to step in if the parent becomes too sick to care for her child. The law gives parents peace of mind that their children will be taken care of by someone they know and trust, without having to give up full custody rights.

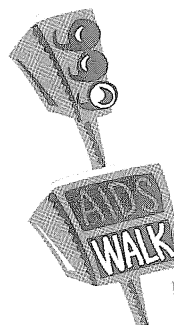
The Standby Guardianship Initiative is staffed by Rodney Cunningham (*pictured above*), supervising attorney of the Family Law Unit, and bilingual Paralegal Marianela Morrell. With support from William Penn, they produced a new **brochure for parents** that provides information about Standby Guardianship in culturally-sensitive and literacy-appropriate language. Since receiving the grant, Rodney and Marianela **trained over 75 parents, 400 social workers, case managers and health-care providers, and 400 attorneys and other legal professionals**. They are conducting aggressive outreach to families with AIDS through support groups, AIDS service organizations and other community groups, and widely distributing the new brochure.



Rodney was featured on WYBE-TV35's Philly Live program discussing the new options for parents provided by the Standby Guardianship Act.

For information on materials and trainings, call **Rodney Cunningham** at **215.587.9377**.

Walk Till It's Over



Join the AIDS Law Project's AIDS Walk Team (#8) on Sunday, October 15 for **Philadelphia AIDS Walk 2000**. Last year, the AIDS Law Project was among more than 40 organizations in the Philadelphia region that received money from the Walk to

provide direct services to people with HIV/AIDS and critical education and prevention services. AIDS Law Project staff and friends will be lacing up our shoes again this year and walking together. Won't you join us? Please use the enclosed form to sign up sponsors. For information call **Team Captain Larry Felzer**, at **215.587.9377**.

PARTING SHOTS

The AIDS Law Project bid farewell to its former Executive Director Nan Feyler at a gala party on Friday, June 2, 2000. Special thanks to host Susan Sherman of the Independence Foundation.



Above: Theeere she is . . . Nan Feyler passes the power tiara to new AIDS Law Project Executive Director Ronda Goldfein.



Above: Taking a break from the buffet are (from left) Chris Bartlett, project director of the SafeGuards; AIDS Law Project Board President David Acosta; and Pat Egan, former AIDS Law Project staff member.

Below left: ActionAIDS Executive Director Kevin Conare (left) celebrates with AIDS Law Project Board Member Dr James Dean. Below right: Sister Kathleen Sonnie hams it up with AIDS Law Project Board member Bruce Flannery (Yes, he's wearing the power tiara!).



AIDS Law Project Meets the Independence Challenge!

We did it! Thanks to the generous support of donors like you, the AIDS Law Project raised \$25,000 in new and increased donations to meet the Independence Challenge Grant. And, as promised, Independence Foundation matched those gifts dollar for dollar, raising a total of \$50,000 in new money to help fight for the rights of people with HIV and AIDS.

Once again, thanks to the Independence Foundation for this unique fund-raising opportunity. And thanks to all our recent Challenge Grant Donors:

Major Gifts

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Michael Zuckerman

Contributions received 3/01/00 through 9/15/00.

AIDS LAW PROJECT EXPANDS BILINGUAL SERVICES

Where would you turn for help if you were a French-speaking African immigrant living with HIV and were trying to access public benefits or were facing a legal issue? None of the case workers at your neighborhood welfare office speak your language. Neither do the staff answering the phone at the Social Security office. You need information about your legal rights, and there seems to be nowhere to turn.

Now, many non-English speakers can get legal advice and representation in their own language from the AIDS Law Project's multi-lingual (French/Spanish/English) attorney **Elisabeth Stuveras**. Elisabeth recently joined the AIDS Law Project as an Independence Foundation Legal Fellow to provide bilingual legal services to the French-speaking immigrant and Latino communities. Elisabeth's focus is to **expand access to Medicaid-funded health care and other public benefits for non-English speaking people with HIV and AIDS**.

Elisabeth will represent French- and Spanish-speaking individuals with HIV/AIDS who are denied Medicaid or who are denied medically-necessary care by their Medicaid HMOs. Through legal advice and translation services, she will work to reduce the barriers to care for people with limited English proficiency and help them navigate the complexities of the welfare, Social Security and Medicaid systems. In addition, Elisabeth will conduct outreach to community-based agencies to ensure that their clients with HIV/AIDS are linked to culturally-sensitive and language-appropriate HIV-experienced health care providers and, where necessary, medically-trained translators.



The AIDS Law Project's multi-lingual team: (from left) Paralegal Marianela Morrell, Independence Legal Fellow Elisabeth Stuveras and Administrative Assistant Maria Alvarez.

Elisabeth is the most recent addition to the AIDS Law Project's bilingual (Spanish/English) team. Bilingual Administrative Assistant/Receptionist **Maria Alvarez** is the first person callers talk to when they turn to the AIDS Law Project for help. Maria directs calls to intake, troubleshoots crises and assists clients and staff with Spanish translation. **Marianela Morrell**, a bilingual paralegal originally from Panama, works with Latino parents with HIV/AIDS to help them make plans for the future care of their children. Marianela also conducts trainings and workshops for Spanish-speaking social workers and case managers about the custody options available to HIV-affected families through the Pennsylvania Standby Guardianship Law. *(For more details on Standby Guardianship, see the article on the facing page.)*

HOT OFF THE PRESS

*The fourth edition of the AIDS Law Project's **HIV/AIDS Public Benefits Advocacy Manual** will be published in November 2000. The manual is a comprehensive and essential resource for AIDS advocates in Pennsylvania to help their clients obtain critical public benefits. It is also a powerful resource for people with HIV/AIDS to understand what public benefits are available.*

The manual provides detailed and up-to-date information on Social Security Income (SSI), Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), Medical Assistance (MA), Medicare, Special Pharmaceutical Benefits Program (SPBP), Food Stamps, General Assistance and TANF (Temporary Aid for Needy Families). Each chapter explains the program, its eligibility requirements, how to apply, and, if

denied, how to appeal. This easy-to-use guide features flow charts, sample forms, examples and advocacy tips to help people with HIV/AIDS get the services they need in the quickest, most efficient way possible.

*The manual costs \$60. It is free to Ryan White-funded case managers. For information or to order the manual, call **215.587.9377**.*

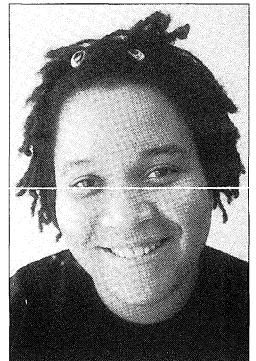
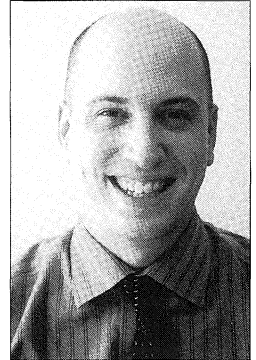
NEW FACES AT THE AIDS LAW PROJECT

The AIDS Law Project is pleased to introduce three new staff members whose special talents enhance our unique services to people living with HIV/AIDS.

Staff Attorney Linda Hee (top) joins us from the Department of Labor and Industry Bureau of Workers Compensation where she served as a law clerk for a workers compensation judge. A recent graduate of Temple Law School, Linda brings more than two years of bankruptcy experience, representing both debtors and creditors, including an internship at the Consumer Bankruptcy Assistance Project. Linda also brings knowledge of immigration law from an internship she completed at the Nationalities Services Center.

Paralegal Tim Rowe comes to us from Goldfein and Joseph, a Philadelphia defense medical malpractice firm. A paralegal for eight years, Tim brings a wide range of experience to the AIDS Law Project. While at the law offices of Marvin Lundy, Tim did plaintiff work on vehicle insurance and personal injury. During an internship at Merck & Company he worked on the legal aspects of marketing new HIV drugs. He also was an investigator for the Philadelphia Police Department, focusing on crimes committed against the homeless, and served on its Homeless Task Force. He is an active volunteer at a number of AIDS organizations, including ActionAIDS and the SafeGuards.

Paralegal Lakeya Chambers brings broad experience from her work assisting paralegals in a number of local law firms. Her legal experience includes personal injury, real estate, antitrust suits, toxic tort litigation, tax liens and bankruptcies. A certified paralegal, Lakeya is pursuing a Liberal Arts degree at Community College of Philadelphia (CCP). She recently completed a work-study program at ActionAIDS, providing secretarial/receptionist support at its North Philadelphia office and assisting the volunteer coordinator. Lakeya is founder and president of the Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance at CCP.



SPECIAL EVENTS NEWS

The AIDS Law Project held a benefit showing of Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? at the Prince Music Theater on June 28, 2000, part of the Theater's "The Eyes Have It—The Films of Elizabeth Taylor" series honoring the star on the occasion of her receiving the 2000 Marian Anderson Award. Special thanks to Gretjen Clausing, Film at the Prince program director, for donating tickets to the AIDS Law Project for this fund-raiser.

Mezzo-soprano/performance artist Martha McDonald donated proceeds of her sold-out September 6, 2000 performance, Diva Trouble, part of the Philadelphia Fringe Festival, to benefit the AIDS Law Project.

Ronda Goldfein

continued from cover page

Six months after joining the agency, Ronda began work on a groundbreaking settlement in which the Philadelphia Fire Department agreed to provide AIDS education to more than 2,000 firefighters and emergency medical technicians.

In the last eight years, Ronda has created monthly insurance and employment seminars for people with AIDS, developed a Housing Advocacy Project to help people with HIV/AIDS avoid eviction, and co-founded the five-county HealthChoices Working Group on

HIV, which advocates for better health care for people with HIV enrolled in Medicaid managed care. In return, the AIDS Law Project has given Ronda what she calls "the most fulfilling work" of her life.

"If I had stayed at one of those big firms, I wouldn't have been fulfilled," she says. "Saving big companies thousands of dollars is not spiritually rewarding.

"I feel offended by the inherent unfairness in things. There is nothing fair about treating someone differently simply because he or she has a virus. Nothing is more arbitrary than disease."