**NEWSLETTER OF THE AIDS LAW PROJECT OF PENNSYLVANIA SPRING 2001**

**Good Counsel**

**LAW PROJECT LAUNCHES BACK-TO-WORK INITIATIVE**

The AIDS Law Project’s Back-to-Work Initiative will collaborate with job training and placement programs like ActionAIDS’ Positive Action. Pictured left to right are ActionAIDS Executive Director Kevin Conner, AIDS Law Project Associate Director Larry Felzer and ActionAIDS Coordinator of Special Programs Crystal Barnett. In front, AIDS Law Project Executive Director Ronda Goldfein

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.

Five years ago, returning to work was not a possibility for most people with AIDS. New drug treatments now enable many people with AIDS to feel healthy enough to work. As more people with AIDS contemplate a return to work, they need information on entering the workforce without losing critical health coverage.

**The Pew Charitable Trusts** recently awarded an **$84,000 grant** over two years to support the AIDS Law Project’s expanded Back-to-Work Initiative, which provides legal advice, representation and educational seminars to help people with AIDS strategize the best way to return to work.

The program, staffed by Executive Director Ronda Goldfein and Associate Director Larry Felzer, will work collaboratively with job training and placement programs serving people with HIV/AIDS, such as ActionAIDS’ Positive Action. Goldfein and Felzer will provide on-site seminars, legal information, advice and representation for participants in these programs. Clients who are eager to work but lack the necessary skills will be referred to these job readiness programs.

Goldfein and Felzer will train AIDS case managers and others to help clients adhere to Social Security rules to ensure a (concluded on last page)
During my eight years at the AIDS Law Project, I have witnessed a huge transformation in the AIDS epidemic.

In this country, AIDS initially affected gay white men. It is now devastating African-Americans, Latinos, women and children. Medical treatment guidelines, which once endorsed the use of HIV drugs early and often, now recommend delaying medication until absolutely necessary. Where the treatment goal was once eradicating HIV, people with AIDS are learning to manage it as a chronic illness.

As a result of these changes, our clients’ legal needs have also changed. Eight years ago, our clients were focused on planning for death. Today, they are planning for their futures. Before, they were concerned with shifting from work to disability. Now, in the era of protease inhibitors and combination therapy, we are advising people who once thought their lives were ending on how to return to work. For many people, work brings not just income and security but a more normalized way of life. Still, fears about jeopardizing their disability income and health insurance coverage prevent many people with AIDS from trying to work.

As our cover story details, we’ve just launched an initiative to let disabled people know how to work without losing public benefits. Through our advice and representation, we hope to give people with AIDS the confidence to overcome those fears and return to work.

Many people with AIDS, who were understandably preoccupied with immediate needs and not their financial future, now face tremendous debt. In response, we recently hired Linda Hee, our first lawyer with bankruptcy experience. To help clients move forward with their lives, Linda assists them in filing for bankruptcy, arranging payment plans or simply notifying creditors of an inability to repay a debt.

Here at the AIDS Law Project, we are committed to listening to and learning from people with AIDS, their care managers, their health care providers, their families and their friends. Through this open dialogue, we can respond with programs that meet the ever-evolving needs presented by this epidemic.

—Ronda Goldfein

Independence Foundation Challenge Grant Continues!

Last Fall, Independence Foundation renewed its challenge grant to the AIDS Law Project, challenging us to raise $25,000 in new money over the next year, which they will match dollar for dollar. This will bring in $50,000 in new money to help the AIDS Law Project fight for the rights of people with HIV and AIDS.

We need your help to reach our goal of $25,000 by September 15! Please make a gift in the enclosed envelope. Every new dollar you donate will be matched—doubling your gift!
LEGAL SERVICES — 2000
(Many clients receive more than one kind of legal service)

TOTAL REQUESTS FOR LEGAL ASSISTANCE — 1,731

CLIENT PROFILES

- Person living with HIV/AIDS 80%
- Social worker/CASE manager 6%
- Family member/Friend 4%
- Healthcare worker 2%
- Attorney 2%
- Other 6%

African American 51%
Hispanic/Latino 9%
Unknown 10%
Other 3%
Caucasian 27%

*includes clients who contact us by mail

MALE 67%
FEMALE 33%

Thanks to our major funders

- AIDS Fund
- Abbott Laboratories
- Agouron Pharmaceuticals
- Arcadia Foundation
- City of Philadelphia, Department of Health, AIDS Activities Coordinating Office
- The Claneil Foundation
- Douty Foundation
- DuPont Pharmaceuticals
- Samuel S. Fels Fund
- Glaxo Wellcome Inc.
- Estate of Charlotte I. Harrison
- Allen Hilles Fund
- Independence Foundation
- Pennsylvania Interest on Lawyers Trust Account Board
- Philadelphia Bar Foundation
- Philadelphia Foundation
- Caroline Saunders Trust No. 2
- The Pew Charitable Trusts
- The Philadelphia AIDS Consortium
- William Penn Foundation
- Henrietta Tower Wurts Memorial

Volunteer attorneys needed
to advise and represent the growing number of people with HIV/AIDS who call the AIDS Law Project for help.
For more information, call Larry Felzer at 215.587.9377
AND TO OUR CHALLENGE GRANT DONORS

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Gifts received
September 16, 2000
to March 8, 2001
Welcome New Board Members . . .

Daniel J. Anders, Esq., is an associate in the Philadelphia office of Pepper Hamilton LLP. Dan has worked for several years as a pro bono attorney for AIDS Law Project clients. He also serves as the local chair for the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, co-chair of the Philadelphia Bar Association’s Committee on the Legal Rights of Lesbians and Gays and a board member of OutFront.

Allen Howell has worked as a case manager assistant at the Jonathan Lax Treatment Center, a health clinic for people with HIV/AIDS run by Philadelphia FIGHT, since the clinic opened three years ago. Prior to that, Allen was a peer educator with Project TEACH. Allen has received legal assistance from the AIDS Law Project and referrals many of his clients for legal help. He brings a unique perspective to the board and is looking forward to “stepping up to the plate for people with AIDS.”

Cathryn Miller-Wilson, Esq. is a Custody and Support Master, Court of Common Pleas, Family Court Division. Prior to becoming a Master, Cathy directed the AIDS Law Project’s Family Program for five years, playing a critical role in the successful passage of Pennsylvania’s Standby Guardianship Law. She is board president of Custody and Support Assistance Clinic, a student-run family clinic that she helped found. She is also the proud mother of four-month-old Elijah.

Kevin Pleasant works as office manager for Philadelphia FIGHT, which provides HIV/AIDS case management, clinical treatment, peer education and prevention outreach. Kevin was the original outreach coordinator for FIGHT’s peer educator program, Project TEACH. As an HIV-positive peer educator and client of the AIDS Law Project, he brings ten years’ experience advocating for the needs of people with HIV/AIDS.

The AIDS Law Project extends its warmest thanks and best wishes to outgoing Board Members Marcos Acevedo, Dawna Edwards and Jan Levine, Esq.

and New Staff

Administrative Assistant Sue Scotese is the newest member of the AIDS Law Project staff. Sue brings a broad range of experience from her work with a number of non-profit organizations including data entry and data-base management with the Mental Health Association of Southeastern Pennsylvania, and donor health counseling and marketing support with the Red Cross of Southeastern Pennsylvania. She also works part-time as a veterinary nurse at the Mt Airy Animal Hospital and cares for four cats and a dog in her Roxborough home.

Special thanks to members of the Philadelphia High School for Creative and Performing Arts’ AIDS Awareness Committee who raised funds for the AIDS Law Project during their “Day Without Art” event in December 2000. The committee handed out AIDS awareness information and red ribbons outside their lunchroom. They hung large sheets of paper on the wall and invited students to write messages and draw pictures in memory of friends and family members they had lost to AIDS. Pictured with the committee is Guidance Counselor Dr Linda Garfield (far right).