

AIDS Legal Council of Chicago

PRESERVING, PROMOTING AND PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH HIV

Fall 2007

Ann Hilton Fisher receives the Thomas H. Morsch Public Service Award

Our very own Executive Director, **Ann Hilton Fisher**, received the *Thomas H. Morsch Public Service Award* at the Chicago Bar Foundation and the Chicago Bar Association's 9th Annual Pro Bono and Public Services Awards luncheon on July 9, 2007.

Established to recognize and reward exemplary lawyers who choose public

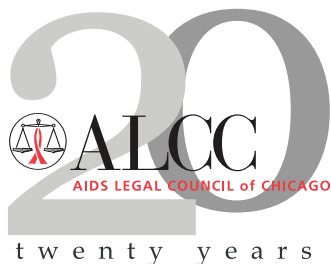
service work as a career, the award was created by the Morsch family and named after Thomas H. Morsch, Esq., a leader in the Chicago legal community who has championed the cause of public interest law for more than 40 years. Congratulations Ann on your award and for 10 years of wonderful service and leadership at ALCC!



Photo Credit: Bill Richert

ALCC Commemorating 20 Years of Service

It's been 20 years since ALCC opened its doors to help people with HIV fight discrimination and overcome the barriers that impede their access to employment, public benefits, stable housing and other vital needs and services. Started in December 1987 by a concerned group of volunteers, the Council has grown significantly over the years, and today has a legal staff of nine assisting hundreds of clients annually at two office locations.



Recalling the early days of the Council's history, when stigma and fear were rampant and medical treatments for HIV were virtually non-existent, paralegal Justin Hayford describes how the Council's staff worked in a constant crisis mode. "The majority of our cases were end-of-life issues. At least once a week, we would rush to someone's bedside to draw up a will. We also fought the flagrant discrimination that was going on. We helped people who were getting kicked

out of their apartments, denied medical care, fired from employment and who experienced other unjust treatment because of their HIV status. Stigma was so intense that people were afraid to come to us. So we would meet them in abandoned buildings and all sorts of strange places. I had a client pick me up and drive around the block over and over while we discussed his case."

While the nature of the epidemic has changed dramatically since those early days, the need for legal assistance continues to be strong. At the end of FY'07, ALCC staff assisted nearly 900 clients with more than 1,370 legal cases. "Most of our work these days," continues Justin, "is in fighting bureaucracies on behalf of people with HIV. But ALCC still delivers services the same way. We have never had a waiting list and we still rush to clients' homes or wherever they need us to give them quick access to legal help."

"My career really has been a blessing. Every day I'm grateful that I have work - work I love - and, as a bonus, clients who are grateful for what little I can do for them."

- Ann Fisher

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Special thanks to the firm of Reed Smith Schnoff Weaver for generously underwriting the AIDS Legal Council's newsletter on occasion of its 20th anniversary.

Special Thanks to our Pro-Bono Volunteers!

The Council would like to extend a very special thank you to the following attorneys for generously volunteering their time and expertise and providing *pro-bono* legal assistance in several of our clients' cases:

Christine Muckle
Sidley Austin LLP

Rick Meyer & Aron Frakes
McDermott Will Emery

Kim Petersen
Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom LLP

Ryan Liebl
Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP

Jean Langie
Vedder Price Kaufman & Kammholz

Matthew Johnson
Sidley Austin LLP

Gerald Angst & Ashwin Janakiram
Sidley Austin LLP

ALCC Participates in 2007 Illinois Elder Rights Conference

Long-time Council volunteer **Leon Liberman** and Executive Director **Ann Fisher** were the hit of the 2007 Illinois Elder Rights Conference, held in Lincolnshire on July 8th. Speaking on the topic *Gay and Lesbian - Growing Older in a Homophobic, Youth-Centered World*, Mr. Liberman, who admits to being 76, entertained and challenged the audience of senior services providers to think about the unique needs and perspectives of the pre-Stonewall generation of lesbians and gay men.

ALCC and AIDS Advocates Fight to Protect Patient Confidentiality in Illinois

An HIV diagnosis is a life-changing event. For this reason, Illinois law has always required specific pre-test counseling and voluntary written consent before someone can be tested for HIV. Recent guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control, however, urge health care providers to "routinely" test all adults for HIV. The guidelines also specifically recommend that states such as Illinois

should amend their laws to no longer require pre-test counseling and written consent for HIV testing.

In response to a number of bills seeking to implement the CDC

recommendations, the Council joined with the AIDS Foundation of Chicago and other advocates to craft compromise legislation which would achieve the CDC's goals without compromising the important principles of informed consent. The compromise legislation, which was signed by the Governor on June 29th, continues to require documented consent for HIV testing, but allows the consent to be verbal or in writing, and encourages providers to develop innovative ways, such as waiting room videos, to convey

"Illinois' response to the CDC's call for routine HIV testing should be a national model. We've preserved informed consent, made it easier for people to get tested, and ensured that people who test positive are linked to care."

– Ann Fisher

the necessary pre-test information. Penalties for violating the law, which also includes important confidentiality provisions, are doubled by the new legislation, which will become effective July 1, 2008.

ALCC Continues to Fight HIV Discrimination

No one with HIV is immune from discrimination. People with HIV from the city and the suburbs, and of every ethnicity, race, and sexual orientation, seek ALCC's assistance when they are denied services because of their HIV status. Recent cases taken on by Council staff and pro bono attorneys include a north suburban married couple who were denied massages because the spa was afraid the massage table would get contaminated; a Hispanic man with HIV who was told by a suburban plastic surgeon that he should seek treatment in the Lakeview neighborhood "where they know about

these things," and an African-American woman who was denied a tattoo by a Southside Chicago tattoo parlor because "it's just our policy." In each of these situations, ALCC staff and pro bono attorneys were able to resolve clients' cases successfully and collect damages.

Justin Hayford, who has been part of ALCC almost since the beginning, comments "I started volunteering here nearly 20 years ago to combat exactly this kind of flagrant discrimination. It is sobering to me that it continues to this day, but I am heartened that we can combat it effectively."

ALCC Honors its 2007 Advocates of the Year

It was a splendid evening as friends of the Council came together on March 22, 2007 to honor this year's Advocates of the Year awardees at the Museum of Contemporary Art. The Advocates of the Year Awards recognize the outstanding contributions of those working locally to make a difference in the lives of persons with HIV. Winners this year were **Dr. Beverly Sha** of Rush University Medical Center, **John Peller** of the AIDS Foundation of Chicago, **Ida Byther-Smith** of Jo-Ray House, **Sidney Thomas** of the Ambulatory & Community Health Network of Cook County, **Dance for Life** and The **Chicago Bar Foundation**. Congratulations again to all the winners and many thanks to everyone who helped make this a spectacular evening! Special thanks to the firm of **Kirkland & Ellis** for generously supporting the event and to the following major sponsors who helped make this year's Awards a record-breaking success:

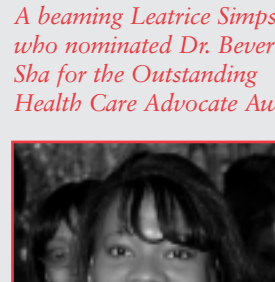


The 2007 Advocates of the Year outside the Museum of Contemporary Art

Photos credited to J.O. Shaff



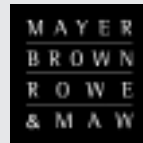
Ida Byther-Smith accepting the 2007 Outstanding Client Advocate Award



A beaming Leatrice Simpson, who nominated Dr. Beverly Sha for the Outstanding Health Care Advocate Award



John Peller of the AIDS Foundation of Chicago accepting the Outstanding Community Advocate Award



AIDS Legal Beagles Raise More Than \$9,000 at AIDS Run & Walk



Team captain, Kate Miller, with our Legal Beagle mascot

Many thanks to all who generously donated to the **AIDS Legal Beagles** team this year and helped us raise more than \$9,000 for our programs at the 2007 AIDS Run & Walk! Although we didn't win the T-shirt design contest (we're demanding a recount!), the event was a tremendous success as friends, colleagues and family joined us to raise needed funds for the fight against AIDS. Special thanks to our top fundraisers, **Ed Jeske, John Hern, Charlie Wintersteen, Kate Miller** (our

team captain), and **Izze Gavin** (our most prolific fundraiser under the age of 2) and to everyone else who contributed and helped us reach our fundraising goal.



The 2007 AIDS Legal Beagles Team

Around the Council



A very special send-off to our good friend **Cynthia Frahm** who left the Council in February after 6 1/2 years of wonderful service as our Director of Development. Cynthia accepted a position as Development Director for Chicago Dramatists where she oversees fundraising to support the theater's mission of developing new

plays and supporting established and emerging playwrights. Best of luck Cynthia in your new position and thank you from all of us at ALCC for your terrific dedication and kind spirit! We are delighted that **Ricardo Cifuentes**, the Council's Director of Community Relations since 2002, has assumed the position of Director of Development.

Full-time attorney **Mirta Woodall** left the Council to pursue a position as an immigration attorney with the Department of Justice. Meanwhile, attorney **Linella Lim Gavin**, who has been with us at ALCC since 1999, returned to the Council part-time on April 1 after an extended leave for the birth of her daughter, Isabelle.



ALCC is delighted to welcome **Peter Subkoviak** to the Council as its new Community Outreach Coordinator. A graduate of the University of Wisconsin in Madison, Peter has a background in public relations and politics, and has worked as a campaign volunteer for U.S. Senator Russ Feingold, and as an intern

with the public relations and political consulting firm of Grainger Terry. Peter will be working primarily in development and outreach at the AIDS Legal Council.



Paralegal **Kate Miller** was recently appointed to the Community Advisory Board of the Illinois Vaccine Project. Kate became involved after two women who were participating in the vaccine trials were tested for HIV and told they were positive, despite their insistence that they were participating in the vaccine project and that regular HIV testing was unreliable.

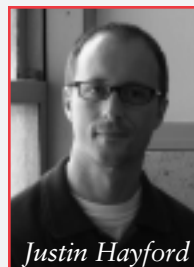
Board News

ALCC is delighted to welcome two new members to the Council's Board of Directors! **Christine Muckle** is an Associate with the firm of **Sidley Austin LLP** and a graduate of the University of Wisconsin Law School. Her practice is in the areas of estate planning, trust and estate administration. We'd like to extend a special thank you to Christine and her colleagues at Sidley for accepting several of our clients' estate planning cases *pro-bono*.

George Gibson joined the Board of Directors in January of this year. A former university teacher and administrator, George is an author, editor and book reviewer, world traveler, and a longtime volunteer in public affairs with the Art Institute of Chicago. George was also a volunteer with Casey House AIDS hospice in Toronto.

Congratulations to ALCC Vice-President **Bernard Cherkasov** who recently joined the firm of **Reed Smith Sachnoff Weaver** where he now practices in the firm's Corporate and Securities group. And board member **Derrick Harden** has moved to the **City Colleges of Chicago** where he now holds the position of **Executive Director of Internal Audit**.

Justin Hayford Named Legal Advocate of the Month by Illinois Legal Aid Online



Paralegal **Justin Hayford** was named Legal Advocate of the Month in June by Illinois Legal Aid Online. Nominated by Susan Curry, executive director of the Public Interest Law Initiative and former director of ALCC, Justin was profiled in a video highlighting his years with the Council and

his passionate commitment to social justice. The video can be found on the Illinois Legal Aid Online website. "It was quite an honor to be selected, and to be in such good company with past winners," Justin says. "I just wish I'd gotten a better haircut before they made my video."

Dance for Life Raises Critical Funds for AIDS Legal Council

dance for life
CHICAGO

Attendees to this year's Dance for Life performance were treated to the dazzling artistry of some of Chicago's premier dance companies coming together at the Harris Theater for Music and Dance to raise money and awareness for HIV/AIDS care. Among this year's beneficiaries for the event on August 18th were the AIDS Foundation of Chicago, Centro San Bonifacio, Pediatric AIDS Chicago, and the AIDS Legal Council of Chicago. Special thanks to the entire Dance for Life team and all participating sponsors and dance companies for making the evening such a wonderful success and raising critical funds that benefit the Council's programs and its clients!



Founder and co-producer of Dance for Life, Keith Elliott



Dancers from Giordano Jazz Dance Chicago perform at 2007 Dance for Life

Photos credited to Barry Brecheisen Photography

ALCC Gets BIA Accreditation

HIV is the one disease that by law prevents someone from entering the United States or becoming a legal permanent resident. Thanks to the Council's recent accreditation with the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA), ALCC paralegals **Justin Hayford**, **Kate Miller**, and **Beth Webber** will now be able to represent foreign-born clients before the U.S. Department of Home-land Security. ALCC assists

more than 200 foreign nationals with HIV every year, and many seek assistance with immigration matters related to adjustment of status. Although only a small number will qualify for a waiver of the HIV ban, those who do need specialized representation. Our accredited paralegals, in addition to the Council's attorneys, will now have the right to represent clients before the BIA.

Anniversary Advocates Circle Campaign Set to Launch

Now in it's sixth year, the Advocates Circle has quickly become one of the most critical vehicles for raising money to support ALCC's programs. Last year was a stellar one for the Circle; the campaign raised a record \$54,000 in needed revenue for the Council! But as we've learned during the past 12 months, even record fundraising can be outpaced by sudden cutbacks in government funding.

That is why, as we commemorate 20 years of service at ALCC, we are asking for your help in reaching our goal of adding 20 new members and increasing our campaign-end total by 20%! Membership starts with as little as \$21 a month, and includes several benefits such as our wonderful Advocates Circle party in the fall. Call (312) 427-8990 and ask for Ricardo Cifuentes to find out how you can start your membership and help us make a difference for people with HIV.

ALCC gives a special thanks to last year's top Advocates Circle contributors:

Jamal Edwards

Christopher Dickinson & Joe Datu

Ed Jeske & John Hern

Dr. Paul Linden

Rob Jespersen & Glenn Arakaki

James Perry & Robert Horton

Rob LoPrete

Randall Ward

George Gibson & John Darey

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Statement of Mission

The AIDS Legal Council of Chicago exists to preserve, promote and protect the legal rights of men, women and children in the metropolitan Chicago area living with HIV/AIDS. The Council provides direct legal services to people in need, educates the public about HIV-related legal issues and advocates for social policies that ensure fair treatment for all people with HIV/AIDS.

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