

# SOUTHWEST WOMEN'S LAW CENTER

## NEWSLETTER

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### FROM THE PRESIDENT

In a few short months, the Southwest Women's Law Center has gone from a dream to an institution with numerous accomplishments and concrete programmatic goals. Our vision remains broad. We envision a society where all women have the opportunity to fulfill their own personal and economic potential. Unfortunately, the cycle of discrimination, poverty and the inability to fully control their reproductive lives makes it difficult and, in some cases, impossible for many New Mexico women to have that opportunity.

Our mission and goals are designed to overcome those obstacles. They are described in the pages of this newsletter. But it is the way we seek to accomplish those goals that may be the most significant and unique aspect of our work. Research and data are critical components of our approach. Establishing relationships with national and local experts and with those who may share one of our goals, but disagree with others, is also a hallmark of our organizational style. As a new organization, our programmatic goals may evolve over the next months and years, but our vision of a better life for girls and women will remain constant.

I want to thank our Board of Directors, our hard-working volunteers and every individual and organization that had the courage to make a financial contribution to a fledgling organization. Our Founders Campaign will end in a few months. We hope that many others will join our initial group of seventeen Founders by making individual donations of \$1,000 or more this year to the Southwest Women's Law Center.

Sincerely,

Jane B. Wishner

### CENTER BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: Jane Wishner

Vice-President /Treasurer: Cristy Carbon-Gaul

Secretary: Anita Miller

Marina Arbetman-Rabinowitz

Shannon Bacon

Alexandra Freedman Smith

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“HOW  
IMPORTANT IT IS  
FOR US TO  
RECOGNIZE AND  
CELEBRATE OUR  
HEROS AND  
SHE-ROES!”

-MAYA ANGELOU

## OUR MISSION

The mission of the Southwest Women's Law Center is to create the opportunity for women to realize their full economic and personal potential by:

- (1) eliminating gender bias, discrimination and harassment;
- (2) lifting women and their families out of poverty; and
- (3) ensuring that all women have full control over their reproductive lives through access to comprehensive reproductive health services and information.

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## OUR APPROACH

The Center seeks unique and creative ideas and collaborations to accomplish its mission, integrating five tools to improve women's lives:

- (1) research and policy analysis;
- (2) community education;
- (3) targeted impact litigation;
- (4) advocacy; and
- (5) collaborations with national and local networks of organizations and individuals who share the Center's specific goals.

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## OUR INITIAL GOALS

The Center is focusing its work in New Mexico but hopes to expand to neighboring states in the Southwest. Our initial programmatic goals are to ensure that:

- (1) students in grades K-12 in New Mexico are free from gender-based bullying, harassment and assault;
- (2) victims of domestic violence and sexual assault are protected from the loss of their homes and their jobs; and
- (3) all women of child-bearing age have access to emergency contraception and have received comprehensive sexuality education.

The Board of Directors has also identified a long-term goal of ensuring flexible family and medical leave policies for employees and their families in New Mexico. We will begin that effort with in-depth research and community education and by focusing on the employment issues facing domestic violence and sexual assault victims.

## DID YOU KNOW...

- New Mexico's poverty rate is 50% higher than the national rate, 18.1% compared to 12.5%.
- Nearly 27% of New Mexico's children and an alarming 48.5% of New Mexico's female-headed households with children and no husband in the household live in poverty.
- 34% of New Mexican mothers with children under the age of 18 do not have health insurance.
- New Mexico has the 2nd highest rate of women in poverty in the country.
- New Mexico has the 5th highest domestic violence rate in the country.
- New Mexico has the 3rd highest teen pregnancy rate in the country.

## OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- (1) Created a coalition to address the problem of sexual assault and harassment in New Mexico schools.
- (2) Designed a long-term program to address the needs of victims of domestic violence who need time off from work in the aftermath of the violence.
- (3) Provided legal analysis and support to a domestic violence coalition working to protect victims of domestic violence and sexual assault from eviction in response to a new public nuisance ordinance adopted in Albuquerque in early 2006.
- (4) Obtained a commitment from the New Mexico Department of Health to increase monitoring of funding of "abstinence-only-until-marriage" education programs to ensure that such programs are medically accurate and that public funds are not used for religious purposes.
- (5) Brought together a group of national and local advocates to strengthen legal protections in New Mexico for women seeking emergency contraception.
- (6) Joined an amicus brief in the United States Supreme Court in an important abortion case in the fall of 2005.

"I WOULD VENTURE  
TO GUESS THAT  
ANON, WHO WROTE  
SO MANY POEMS  
WITHOUT SIGNING  
THEM, WAS OFTEN A  
WOMAN."

-*VIRGINIA WOOLFE*

### WE MOVED!

Marilynn Cooper and Homes By Marilynn, Inc. provided the Southwest Women's Law Center with our first office in a wonderful building on Yale Boulevard. Without their support and encouragement, we never could have accomplished as much as we have.

In January, 2006, the Center moved to a building owned by the ACLU of New Mexico. The Center works in close proximity to the ACLU, Equality New Mexico, the Homeless Advocacy Coalition and a private civil rights attorney. The move has generated new professional collaborations and opportunities for the Southwest Women's Law Center.