

Legal Advocacy Fund \$40,000 Matching Gift Challenge Pays Off

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MY THANKS to the 12 branches that got an early start on their fund-raising efforts for LAF. These branches and other supporters have already sent in some or all of their 2002 donations so they could be part of the \$40,000 anonymous donor challenge that ended on May 31, 2002. Here in North Carolina, we raised \$4,759.50 by the deadline and nationally a grand total of \$130,249 was collected to help fight sex discrimination. Congratulations on a great job, and thanks to everyone who participated.

As we once again gear up our programming activities for another year, I hope the Legal Advocacy Fund will be high on your branch priority list. Linking programs to fund-raising has always been a good plan. The LAF fund-raising year runs from January 1, 2002 to December 31, 2002. Every branch has a goal determined by your Feb. 1, 2002 membership count X \$5.00. The help of EVERY NC branch is needed to meet our \$10,000 goal.

Last year, the Legal Advocacy Fund office received many more requests for help than they could fill. Plenty of women and girls out there need our help. This fact was clearly demonstrated to me as I attended the AAUW Leadership Conference in Washington, June 21-23. The featured speaker at the Awards Dinner was LAF-supported plaintiff Susan Whittaker. Susan had been employed by Northern Illinois University as a janitor beginning in 1988. Several foremen (all male) supervised her work. She received satisfactory performance evaluations until 1990, when she complained that male employees were harassing her. Actions against her included such things as unwelcome sexual comments, being regularly ordered by her boss to fold the laundry, deeming it "women's work," and being accused of "taking a man's job." The harassment continued to follow her into her home after her work hours had ended. She often went home to find obscene messages on her answering machine which frightened her two young daughters. She took her battle through the proper legal channels. When her employer refused to take her complaints seriously, she sued for sex discrimination under Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. LAF adopted Whittaker's case in February 2001 with \$16,000 in case support. We wait for a settlement. Thanks to all of you for making it possible for women like Susan to take a stand and to further the mission of AAUW "to promote equity for all women and girls, life long education, and positive societal change." We are all in this together and need the support of each other and every branch to make it happen.

A couple of big LAF-supported cases have recently been resolved. The cases of Barbara Zylbert vs. Stanford University and Carol Stepien vs. Case Western Reserve University have had a happy ending. Final settlement details will be coming later.

LAF Progress in Equity Award Winner Announced

EACH YEAR, the AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund Progress in Equity Award (PIE) honors a college or university program that improves the climate for women on campus. The 2002 PIE Award winner is the Women's Center at the University of Virginia. The program will receive a \$10,000 stipend.

Following a 1988 climate study, the University of Virginia Task

Force on the Status of Women faced a difficult reality: The environment for female students, staff, and faculty was not equitable. Unlike many institutions, the University of Virginia did not hide the problem. Instead, they created a women's center. For almost 15 years, the Women's Center has been a voice for advocacy on campus and beyond. Volunteers at the center mentor middle school girls, research the status of female and minority faculty on campus, or provide assistance to women in the Free Legal Clinic. Professionals within the university community also provide counseling for survivors of sex crimes through the Sexual Assault Education Office, a leader in sexual assault education.

In the past year, more than 25,000 men and women have participated in the center's programs. The demand for counseling services has tripled in the last three years, and the number of middle school girls participating in Young Women Leaders Program has doubled. Congratulations to the University of Virginia Women's Center. (Taken from the AAUW Women in Charge Program Booklet, June 22, 2002)

I invite every AAUW NC member to help us find the next Progress in Equity Award winner. Take a hard look at your local college or university. Do they have a program promoting sex equity on campus? Could they use \$10,000 to continue the program? If you answered yes to the above questions nominate the program for the Progress in Equity Award. PIE winners receive up to \$10,000 to support women on campus. The only way LAF learns of these praiseworthy programs is through YOUR nominations. Applications must be submitted by March 15, 2003. Nomination forms are available at www.aauw.org and are also in the LAF Tool Kit. The LAF board selects the next PIE winner in June 2003.

Campus Outreach Program

IT IS my hope, this year, that we can bring a Legal Advocacy Fund Campus Outreach Program to a couple of our college campuses here in North Carolina. The AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund continues a nationwide Campus Outreach Program to assist those who don't see or know how to change the discrimination they see in their own institutions.

As LAF President Sylvia Newman so aptly put it. "In many cases, these unseeing members of the academic community include younger women faculty members who begin their academic careers feeling welcomed and encouraged by their institutions. As they try to advance through the system, they often see that their chances for tenure is far lower than that of their male colleagues, and their upward path is blocked by subtle and unyielding discrimination. Casting the spotlight of scrutiny on sex discrimination in our colleges and universities is the vital role of the LAF Campus Outreach Program." Do you have a college near you that could benefit from such a program where woman can discuss their experiences of sex discrimination, wage disparity, and sexual harassment? Campus outreach presentations address the reality of issues in higher education, strategies to prevent or resolve them when they do occur. Call me at 919-545-0161 or e-mail me at jbernlshr@aol.com or contact your branch LAF Chair to share your concerns. Together we will try to make it happen.