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Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders to Mark 30 Years Advancing Rights of LGBT People

Nearly 30 years ago, a sting operation targeting gay men took place in the Boston Public Library. It resulted not only in the entrapment and arrest of 103 men, but also in a vigorous response by the gay community, and the creation of Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders (GLAD).

GLAD evolved from the law practice of John Ward, who in 1978 was the only openly gay male lawyer in Boston. The civil suit Ward and his colleagues filed, *Doe v. McNiff*, charged city officials with false arrest, negligence, malicious prosecution and civil conspiracy. The city eventually settled with the plaintiffs in 1985.

Today GLAD is New England's legal advocacy group for LGBT equality, and a national leader on LGBT legal issues. GLAD now has eight attorneys on staff litigating in state and federal courts and working on legislative advocacy across New England.

Throughout 2008, GLAD will honor its history, looking at some of the precedent-setting cases that have catapulted the organization into the headlines, and highlighting some of the people whose courage and determination changed the lives of LGBT people throughout the country.

"It's hard to believe that in just 30 years, anti-discrimination laws have become the rule rather than the exception in New England, and marriage equality is the law of the land in Massachusetts," said GLAD Executive Director Lee Swislow. "This tremendous progress would not have happened without GLAD's advocacy and ground-breaking legal work."

Over the years, GLAD has been called "the little engine that could" and a "legal powerhouse." (*Hartford Courant*, May 11, 2007). GLAD's most famous case, *Goodridge v. Department of Public Health* (2004), enabled same-sex couples to marry in Massachusetts and brought international attention to the organization. In a *New York Times Magazine* article, historian David Garrow likened GLAD's Civil Rights Project Director Mary Bonauto to Thurgood Marshall for her role as an "architect of the marriage movement."

GLAD has been part of every significant issue of the gay rights movement of the late 20th century, litigating cases involving parenting, HIV/AIDS, gay and lesbian students, and discrimination against transgender people:

- ***Fricke v. Lynch* (1980):** Like many high school seniors in Cumberland, Rhode Island in June of 1980, Aaron Fricke was making plans to go to his prom. But because he wanted to bring

his boyfriend, the school said no. Represented by GLAD, Aaron sued – and won. At a time when few gay high school students had the courage to be out, this case was a milestone.

- ***Bragdon v. Abbott (1998)***: When Dr. Randon Bragdon of Bangor, Maine refused dental care to Sydney Abbot because she had HIV, his attitude reflected widespread fear and misinformation about the disease. GLAD represented Sydney, suing and winning at the U.S. Supreme Court. The case established that people with HIV are protected from discrimination by the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- ***Doe v. Yunits (2000)***: This landmark ruling was the first reported decision in a case brought by a transgender student. Katrina Harrington was a middle-school student in Brockton, MA. Though born male, she experienced herself as female and wore female clothing to school – over the objection of her school’s principal. With the support of her grandparents, and the assistance of GLAD, Katrina won that right to dress as she chose.
- ***Goodridge v. Department of Public Health (2003)***: November 2008 will be the fifth anniversary of the *Goodridge* decision establishing marriage equality in Massachusetts, and will provide an occasion to look back at GLAD’s role in establishing Vermont civil unions (*Baker v. Vermont*) and ahead to the outcome of GLAD’s pending marriage case in Connecticut (*Kerrigan & Mock v. Department of Public Health*).

Thirtieth anniversary activities in 2008 will include:

Events: Three panels during the year will examine some of GLAD’s biggest cases. The first, on January 23, 2008, will be “Sex on the Margins: The More Things Change,” featuring journalist and historian Michael Bronski, columnist and author Susie Bright and GLAD legal director Gary Buseck. Other panels will highlight GLAD’s 1998 win at the U.S. Supreme Court establishing anti-discrimination protections for people living with HIV, and the marriage movement in New England. Visit www.glad.org for more information.

Podcasts: In monthly podcasts, GLAD will converse with the plaintiffs and attorneys involved in some of the organization’s most important cases.

Website: GLAD will launch a 30th anniversary mini-site on January 15, 2008, which will feature archival documents, photos, video, podcasts, and event information, at www.glad.org/30years.

GLAD has also been a launching pad for many of the gay and lesbian movement’s national leaders. Early board members **Richard Burns** and **Tim McFeeley** became executive directors, respectively, of New York’s Gay and Lesbian Community Center and the Human Rights Campaign. Former GLAD E.D. **Kevin Cathcart** has been E.D. of Lambda Legal for the past 15 years. **Urvashi Vaid** interned at GLAD as a law student and later became E.D. of the National Lesbian and Gay Task Force, and is currently E.D. of the Arcus Foundation. Local E.D.’s **Grace Sterling Stowell** (BAGLY) and **Jacob Smith Yang** (MAAP) each worked at GLAD.

GLAD attorneys, including **Gary Buseck**, **Ben Klein**, **Mary Bonauto**, and **Jennifer Levi** are recognized nationally as experts in their field, key strategic thinkers for the movement, and fearsome litigators. “Our senior attorneys have been on the cutting edge of some of the most important legal decisions of our time,” said Swislow. “Collectively they have more than 70 years experience doing work that saves lives, gives voice to people on the margins, and reminds courts, legislatures, and the public that true equality means equality for everyone.”

GLAD Executive Director Lee Swislow, GLAD attorneys, and plaintiffs, will be available for interview throughout the year. Contact Carisa Cunningham at 617-426-1350 to arrange interviews.