

## Meet Ellen Goodstein Executive Director of the Legal Aid Foundation

By Lynn E. Goebel

*We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.*

—Winston Churchill

The Legal Aid Foundation of Santa Barbara County (LAFSBC) welcomes to its ranks new Executive Director Ellen Goodstein.

Ellen comes to Santa Barbara from Florida where she was an integral part of the Legal Aid Society of Palm Beach County, serving as a senior staff member responsible for writing grants that garnered Federal funds to create a program providing legal assistance to HIV-positive persons in the county among other programs. She was also responsible for starting a juvenile advocacy project and "Project Permanent Placement" which assisted with guardianships, adoptions, and custody matters for orphaned children of HIV-positive individuals. In her "spare" time, Ellen worked at the self-help center at the Palm Beach County Courthouse.

Seeking a change of life, she picked up her Floridian stakes (land of heat and hurricanes) and headed out West. Brooklyn-born (hard to overlook after just a few moments of conversation), she literally rented out her house, packed her car, and put those things that didn't fit in said car into storage. "Something was missing, and I've always had an affinity for the West," so here she is.

Upon arriving in Santa Barbara, the first thing Ellen did was visit the Legal Resource Center located on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the McMahon Law Library in the Santa Barbara County Superior Courthouse. There she met one of Legal Aid's attorneys who staffs the Center, Jane Wierda. She soon found her short volunteer stint increase ("3 days became 5 days") and then transition into an 8 week job, including work with the Domestic Violence Restraining Order Clinic.

Licensed to practice law in Florida, Ellen was interested in taking the post of Legal Aid's Director of Litigation. However, she felt it would behoove her to be licensed to practice in the Golden State. So, she signed up for the California State Bar Exam. Shortly after sending in the application paperwork, she instead became the interim, and now permanent, Executive Director of Legal Aid. As a result, her allotted study time consisted of setting aside her work

with Legal Aid each evening at 6 p.m. and cracking the Bar study books until 11 p.m. She allowed herself one day off from work, the Friday before the exam, and at press time, is awaiting her Bar results. In the interim, she assures me that she passed her Moral Character Examination.

But let's talk about her recent accomplishments with her colleagues at Legal Aid. On March 31, 2006 there was the successful

"Evening with Al Franken" event that met and exceeded the expectations of many. "It really raised the bar on Legal Aid, and its profile in such a positive way." Capitalizing on its positive momentum, on the fundraising side, Legal Aid plans to do 10% Tuesdays at Aldo's Restaurant where 10% of the lunch proceeds will go to benefit Legal Aid, its services and its programs. (Folks in the Santa Barbara community may not realize that Legal Aid is dependent upon three sources of income: grants, donations, and fundraising.) Volunteer assistance is always greatly appreciated and desperately needed. On the accolades side for those pro bono attorneys who have so generously donated their time and talent, look for future events to possibly include a "Lawyers of Distinction" luncheon in the Fall.

Future pro bono projects that need attorney assistance include a pro bono panel where Legal Aid can turn to the private Bar with meritorious cases that Legal Aid is precluded from prosecuting. New projects for which funds are being sought include a housing advocacy project and a family law services project where legal services may be offered at a very reduced rate and, over time, the programs may become self-sustaining.

"Legal Aid is in my blood," says Ellen. When her blood's not pumping in championing the rights of the poor and the elderly (among others), she participates in bike rides to fundraise for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, a cause that is close to her heart. This summer, she'll bicycle 100 miles in 1 day and then perhaps take a much-needed and a well-deserved nap. But, when you meet Ellen you soon realize that this is a woman who does not sit still. And, Legal Aid, and the greater Santa Barbara legal community at large can certainly get behind that energy.

Welcome, Ellen.



Ellen Goodstein