

The **ACLU** News

Chapter Update

The Statewide Emergency Summit held on April 9 was a remarkable success. The state affiliate was impressed with the consistency of concerns expressed across geographic and demographic lines. The four major areas of concern - Safe and Free (including the Patriot Act), Religious Bullying (including school-based curricula issues), Marriage Equality/LGBT rights and Reproductive rights - without fail were mentioned in all of the group discussions. These shared concerns demonstrate clearly that we can develop a statewide agenda of common cause.

The Champaign County ACLU and Anti-War, Anti-Racism Effort (AWARE) co-sponsored a forum on the USA PATRIOT Act on June 15 at the new community space at the Urbana Free Library. Ed Yohnka, Director of Communications for the ACLU of Illinois, was the main speaker and was welcomed with many great questions. There were nearly 100 participants in the audience.

While the Champaign County ACLU was in recess over the summer, the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) released its highly anticipated report on traffic stops. The local chapter continues to monitor the reaction of this study and is concerned with the growing number of race-based stops.

Public Defender Randy Rosenbaum spoke at the October Steering Committee meeting and addressed issues concerning over-charging, bail amounts and duration of pre-trial detention. Randy also talked about how treatment of juvenile cases has changed over the years, with varying degrees of emphasis on station adjustments. He also decried abuses inherent in the local "drug court," which results in appearance by defendants in front of a judge without counsel, imposition of 180 day "blanket" sentences, and the failure to follow the "early intervention" preferred approach of drug court.

Sheriff Dan Walsh talked with the Steering Committee at its September meeting and answered questions for about forty-five minutes. He enumerated the duties of the sheriff and described the current status of the jails. Sheriff Walsh stated that he is concerned about the high population in the jails and that boarding out of county is costly. The use of home confinement has increased but so have mandatory jail terms for traffic violations. Walsh also noted that Judge Difanis has issued an order, effective September 1, that all cases must go

to trial within sixty days; the sheriff believes that will help reduce the jail population since most people are there awaiting trial. Sheriff Walsh estimated that incarceration here cost about \$40 per day; 10-11% of the jail population is on psychotropic medication.

The City of Urbana is moving forward toward creating a citizen review board to provide members of the public with a formal mechanism for filing complaints about police policies and individual incidents involving police officers. Mayor Laurel Prussing appointed a task force to study the issue and make a recommendation early next year. ACLU steering committee member Esther Patt was appointed to chair the task force which held its first meeting on October 11.

For a second year in a row, the Champaign County ACIU was a co-sponsor of the CU Citizens for Peace and Justice annual Unity March. About 100 students and concerned community members marched from two separate points to meet at the courthouse in downtown Urbana.

The Illinois General Assembly convenes the 2005 Veto Session on Tuesday, October 25. The session runs for three days during that week and three more days the first week of November. One of the issues scheduled for debate during the Veto session is a proposal - supported by the ACLU of Illinois - that would create a new, independent Department of Juvenile Justice in Illinois. Today, all juveniles incarcerated by the State are under the care of the Department of Corrections - which has responsibility for housing 44,000 adult prisoners and 1,600 juveniles. Because the DOC directs most of its programs toward the overwhelming number of adult prisoners, juveniles fail to get appropriate programs and services that would benefit youth. The results are sad - Illinois juveniles have a 46.6% recidivism rate, while our neighbors in Missouri (with a separate Department of Juvenile Justice) has a recidivism rate of less than 10%. If you want to keep up on developments with this legislation or learn about other civil liberties issues in the Illinois General Assembly, please visit www.aclu-il.org/legislative/alerts.

The Champaign County ACLU now has over 800 card-carrying members in the area. We hope you will join us for our Fall Gathering fundraiser on November 6. Please submit the response form on the enclosed flyer or respond on-line at WWW.ACLU-CU.ORG.

PARKLAND COLLEGE THEATRE PRESENTS *THE EXONERATED*

NEW PLAY HIGHLIGHTS THE REAL STORIES OF THOSE EXONERATED FROM DEATH ROW

As its fall opening production, Parkland College Theatre and Director Randi Jennifer Collins Hard presented *The Exonerated* - a play written by Jessica Blank and Erik Jensen about the true stories of six people sentenced to death and then later exonerated based on innocence. The play had a successful run from September 28 to October 9.

Culled from interviews, letters, transcripts, case files, and the public record, *The Exonerated* tells the true and moving stories of six wrongfully convicted survivors of death row in their own words. The 90-minute, riveting and hard-hitting play moved between first-person monologues and scenes set in courtrooms and prison. The six interwoven stories paint a picture of an American criminal justice system gone horribly wrong - and of six brave souls who persevered to survive it.

The Friday, September 30th performance was followed by a talkback and discussion with Delbert Tibbs, a poet now living in Chicago and one of the exonerated portrayed in the play, and Rachael Dietkus, former Program Director of the Illinois Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty and current President of the Champaign County ACLU.

Director Collins-Hard said that their production of *The Exonerated* was very different from other productions they have done. She also noted that "it is obviously extremely 'now.' It's very socially relevant, and it's very real in its presentation. There aren't big intricate sets or costumes and that kind of thing. It's very bare-boned, and it's very much the true stories of six people who served anywhere from 2 years to 22 years on death row who were exonerated because of actual innocence."

The Exonerated was written by two New York actors who traveled all over the country in 2000 - 2001, visiting people who were exonerated from death row. Their notes and interviews were transcribed into a production that was first performed in San Francisco and New York with credible actors such as Tim Robbins, Gabriel Byrne, Richard Dreyfus, Susan Sarandon, Danny Glover, and Will Farrell.

Dietkus was in attendance for a private performance by the New York cast (including Danny Glover, Richard Dreyfus and Mike Farrell) done in December 2003 for then-governor George Ryan. After returning to Champaign in late 2004, she pitched the idea to Collins-Hard with the hopes that Parkland would be interested in doing a local production of the play. Though Collins-Hard was interested, use of the script was restricted. Once the restrictions were lifted, she and Dietkus began working on the production.

The stories presented in *The Exonerated* give audiences an inside perspective on capital punishment. In many respects,

the play acts as not only as an educational piece, but as a real eye-opener for most. No matter what one's position is on the death penalty, audience members left being affected in some way.

For more information about the death penalty and how you can get involved, please visit www.deathpenaltyinfo.org or www.aclu.org/deathpenalty.

COMPREHENSIVE SEX ED FOR C-U SCHOOLS

In support of ACLU's statewide initiative to ensure that public schools provide comprehensive sex education, Champaign County ACLU has joined the local Campaign for Comprehensive Sex Education. Steering Committee members Kristin Solberg and Esther Patt have been working with the group to organize support for school board action to adopt a comprehensive curriculum for ages K - 12.

Champaign and Urbana schools once had comprehensive sex education but now that state standards mandate only abstinence education, that's all that many teachers provide. Students take only one semester of health education during four years of high school and each health teacher decides whether to provide any information about sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy other than the assertion that abstinence is the only way to prevent pregnancy and disease.

On Tuesday, November 1 at 7:30 p.m., the Urbana Board of Education will be reviewing the health curriculum proposed to be used for the next six years. It is not known at this time whether comprehensive sex education (contraception, preventing sexually transmitted diseases, dating violence, decision making) is part of the curriculum that will be recommended to the school board.

Supporters of age-appropriate sex education are encouraged to contact school board members to express your support. If you live in Urbana, your presence at the November 1 meeting, whether or not you address the school board, will be very helpful.

A recent study published in the New York Times last month found that nationwide, more than 20% of 15 year old boys and girls had already engaged in sexual intercourse and more than one third of the boys had engaged in oral sex. The teen pregnancy rate in the U.S. is down from 11.6% in 1990 to 8.5% in 2005 but that is still the highest teen pregnancy rate of all developed nations in the world.

ACLU PRODUCES NEW TV SERIES: *THE FREEDOM FILES*

The Freedom Files is a new 10-part series from award-winning producer/director Robert Greenwald (*Unconstitutional*, *Outfoxed*, and others) aimed to strip away the sound bites and reveal how civil liberties affect real people everyday.

The first episode, *Beyond the Patriot Act*, released in September, examines how a sweeping and misguided law is restricting our most basic constitutional freedoms and threatening America's system of government. The

second episode, *The Supreme Court*, was also recently released. The Chapter has subscribed to the DVD series and plans on having them shown on UPTV, local cable channel 6. Please check our web site (www.aclu-cu.org) for times to watch beginning in November.

Also see <http://www.aclu.tv/> for more viewing options, including viewing on the web and scheduled showings on LinkTV via the DISH Network and DirectTV. The DVDs may also be ordered directly.

ACLU Officers & Steering Committee

The local ACLU Steering Committee meets on the first Thursday of each month at 7:30 pm, in the conference room at Campbell Hall (WILL studios) in Urbana. Meetings are open to members—if you would like to be placed on the agenda, please contact Rachael Dietkus or any other committee member ahead of time.

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**Fall Gathering
Sunday Nov. 6th!**

**We're on the Web!
WWW.ACLU-CU.ORG**

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Hiram and Jean Paley visit with friend Dawn Clark Netsch (left) during the Bill of Rights Celebration October 1st at the Hyatt Regency in Chicago. Netsch, a former Illinois gubernatorial candidate, received the Roger Baldwin Award in 2002, along with our own Victor Stone.

Hiram Paley Accepts Roger Baldwin Award

More than 600 attended the Roger Baldwin Foundation annual Bill of Rights celebration fundraiser in Chicago, including 15 from the local chapter area who attended in support of Hiram Paley's top honor for lifetime commitment and dedication to the cause of civil liberties. The fundraiser included silent and live auctions and raised a significant amount of money to support ACLU-IL litigation efforts.

Other awardees included: Geoffrey Stone, Professor of Law at the University of Chicago School of Law; Diane Geraghty, Director of the Civitas ChildLaw Center at Loyola Law School in Chicago; the Honorable Emil Jones, President of the Illinois State Senate; State Senator Carol Ronen; State Representative Larry McKeon; local Chicago activist and lawyer Jerry Newton; and, J.D. Wheeler a long-time activist from Peoria.

An ACLU member for 45 years, Hiram first became active in local Urbana politics in 1961 when he joined a movement to support open housing. By 1973, his activism propelled him into the office of Mayor, where he lead the effort to make Urbana the first community in Illinois to adopt a human rights ordinance that barred discrimination against racial minorities, as well as gay men and lesbians, in housing and basic public accommodations. For decades, he has used his influence as a Democratic leader in Champaign County to encourage legislative and congressional candidates to support reproductive choice, a theme he emphasized in his acceptance speech. He has been a valued member of the chapter steering committee, and has been President of the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Champaign County (formerly the Memorial Society), which provides its membership with a wide range of end-of-life matters, including physician related suicide as promoted by the Hemlock Society. Community members are also familiar with his passion for photography, as President of the Champaign County Camera Club.