

The **ACLU** News

“Road Trip for Justice” Arrives at UI Campus March 31

On Wednesday, March 31, 2004, Amnesty International’s death penalty Road Trip for Justice will be making a stop on the University of Illinois campus. Speakers include Jennifer Bishop-Jenkins from Murder Victims’ Families for Reconciliation; John Lyons from Amnesty International; Rachael Dietkus from the YWCA of the University of Illinois and formerly the Illinois Coalition Against the Death Penalty; and Aaron Patterson, one of four men pardoned by former Governor George Ryan in January 2003. The event will start at 7:00 p.m. and will be in room 192 Lincoln Hall.

By the late 1990’s, Illinois’ death penalty debate was shifting dramatically. From February 1999 to January 2000 alone, four men had been exonerated. By the year 2000, exonerations exceeded executions and a call for a moratorium was intensifying. Not too soon after on January 30, 2000, Governor Ryan called for a moratorium on executions. Within a few months, Ryan assembled a blue-ribbon commission to study and carefully examine the state’s flawed capital punishment system. After more than two years of extensive study and research, and having heard testimony from those involved from both sides of the issue, the bi-partisan Commission issued its report in April 2002. This study, by far the most extensive study to date on any particular state’s capital punishment system, made 85 recommendations that would attempt to reform the existing flawed system.

One of the most important issues the Commission recognized was that no system can be devised to ensure that an innocent person would not be executed. The distinguished group also urged that con-

sideration be given to the fact that none of those who had been under a sentence of death had the benefit of changes required to make the system more fair and accurate.

Many organizations working on death penalty issues, organizations like the ACLU, Amnesty International, the Illinois Coalition Against the Death Penalty, and the Center on Wrongful Conviction’s, found it hard to imagine that Governor Ryan would take such bold action as to consider – let alone actually follow through with – clearing out death row. But in addition to commuting the sentences of everyone from death to life without the possibility of parole, Ryan also pardoned four based on actual innocence. Aaron Patterson, one of the four pardoned and immediately released on January 10, 2003, has spoken on the U of I campus several times. In fact, Aaron first told his story via phone at the Courtyard Café in April 2001 when he was still in prison.

Recent legislation that enacts some of the Commission’s recommended reforms passed recently in the General Assembly. Yet as of December 2003, the Illinois Coalition Against the Death Penalty found 175 currently pending cases where the death penalty was being sought. The Road Trip for Justice seeks to educate the public about the continued flaws in the system as well as offer a forum where citizens can talk to those personally connected and involved in the issues.

For more information about the Road Trip for Justice, please e-mail rdietkus@hotmail.com or call 344-0721.

UPDATE ON THE CHAMPAIGN COUNTY JUVENILE JUSTICE ISSUES FORUM

In 1997, a broad range of community leaders recognized a serious concern surrounding juvenile detention in Champaign County. A group was formed to bring together local citizens and youth service agencies to consider this problem in a larger context. Stan Levy, former Chapter President and current Steering Committee member, and Shirley Stillinger, Chapter Secretary, played crucial roles in this development. A proposal for prevention funding was submitted to the Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS), and Champaign County was one of eleven communities in Illinois to be competitively selected for Title V: Delinquency Prevention funds. A diverse group of officials, social service providers, juvenile justice practitioners, business and industry, parents, youth, and citizen advocates were then brought together to comprise the Champaign County Delinquency Prevention Board. The funding grant specifically named the ACLU Chapter to be represented on the Board. The mission was to mobilize families and communities to equip children and youth with the skills and values that would enable them to refrain, and want to refrain, from committing crimes and other delinquent acts. Over its 5 year history, the Delinquency Prevention Board made significant strides for youth in our County. A Comprehensive Needs Assessment was completed, a Prevention Plan was developed, programs were expanded or established, and system changes were initiated. However, the Board had no permanent source of funding nor formal governmental support. Thus, when funding ran out in 2002, the Board was forced to suspend its activity. Large hurdles still existed, especially for youth engaging in risky behaviors.

To address the continued need, Stan Levy, Shirley Stillinger, Joan Miller (of the League of Women Voters) and Tracy Parsons (of the Urban League) met with Judge Gregory Townsend. Under Judge Townsend's aegis, a panel was established during the following year. At the end of 2003, it held its first meeting as the Juvenile Justice Issues Forum. For the first time in the County, a body was formed with explicit representation from all constituencies: the Judiciary, the States Attorney Office, the Police, and community organizations and individuals.

The second meeting was held on February 26 in the Courthouse, to which I received a specific invitation as President of the Champaign County Chapter of the ACLU. At least two other Steering Committee members, Shirley Stillinger and Rachael Dietkus, also attended. The meeting was hosted by Judges Ford and Difanis, and about 150 individuals from other constituencies were present. Most of the meeting was devoted to a presentation by two members of the States Attorney Office in Cook County on "Balanced and Restorative Justice". This approach is based on the idea that the victim

and the community, as well as the offender, need to be involved in resolution of problems. The approach makes heavy use of consultation and seeks to provide diversion away from formal judiciary and penal systems. It looks strongly to community organizations to provide consultations and alternatives to penal institutionalization. It was clearly predicated on the failure of methods based on incarceration, not only because of their lack of success in avoiding recidivism, but also in terms of their high cost. The presenters noted that the program was having a very beneficial effect both for reducing the burden on judicial and penal institutions, and on successful treatment of the offenders. A great deal of general information about Balanced and Restorative Justice (BARJ) is available on the web. One resource is:

<http://ssw.che.umn.edu/rjp/BARJ.htm>

Local officials then spoke, noting that Champaign County had moved significantly towards approaches involving consultation and diversion. Station Adjustments (agreements between the Police and the offender that avoid formal court proceedings) are much more common throughout the County. From one who saw how difficult it was just two years ago to get Police Departments to implement Station Adjustments, the progress has been extraordinary. In addition, there is a greater reliance on diversion at the States Attorney Office. Community organizations are playing a much more significant role. At the end of the meeting, I volunteered to be our official contact for the Forum.

There are some potential problems we need to watch for. The community based methods make use (perhaps heavy use) of faith-based organizations. I saw nothing to indicate any procedures at the intake phase that would inform offenders or their parents (or guardians) about the possibility of involvement with a faith-based organization, nor do there appear to be ways to allow the parents or guardians to avoid having a faith-based organization involved. Oversight of the community organizations also needs to be watched to assure that constitutional rights (like equal protection) are not violated. Also, the fact that cost reductions play a role requires careful and continuous attention so that the quality of treatment for juvenile offenders is not sacrificed. Nonetheless, those of us who have been following juvenile justice issues in Champaign County are extremely pleased and hopeful that these new initiatives will continue to prove both more humane and more successful for our County youth.

- Steve Portnoy

EMAIL LIST REMINDER

In an effort to improve communication among our 600+ members, two new email lists are available. The "Announce" list is for timely announcements of local events or requests to contact legislators on pending legislation. The "Members" list is for general discussion of civil liberties issues. Complete information and sign-up is available on our web site, www.aclu-cu.org.

E-mail addresses of subscribed members are kept confidential.

2004 Annual Meeting

Please join us Sunday April 18th for our annual meeting to elect officers and steering committee members and present awards. Due to favorable comments last year, we once again have reserved the Illinois Terminal facilities.

There should be a flyer insert in this newsletter providing a reservation form. If your copy is missing the insert, you may reserve on-line at: www.aclu-cu.org or call any Steering Committee Member.

ACLU Officers & Steering Committee

The local ACLU Steering Committee meets on the last 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 Steve Portnoy or any other committee

OFFICERS:

President:

Stephen Portnoy
208 W. Florida, U 61801
367-8853
e-mail: portnoy@stat.uiuc.edu

Vice-President:

Paul Wisovaty
112 E. Van Allen, Tuscola 61953
253-2157, 253-4392 (fax)

Co-Secretary:

Shirley Stillinger
1003 S. Busey, U 61801
344-6743
Stillinger@attglobal.net

Co-Secretary:

Kevin Nolan
1014 Hollycrest, C 61821
351-5035 (h), 384-3714 (o)
e-mail: sorrowfloats3@netscape.net

Treasurer:

C. Ward Henson
2508 Nottingham Dr., C 61821
359-9348 (h)
e-mail: henson@math.uiuc.edu

STEERING COMMITTEE:

Tom Betz
707 W. Oregon, U 61801
328-5419 (h), 333-9053 (o)
e-mail: tbetz_legalguy@yahoo.com

Bill Brown
304 W. Nevada, U 61801
344-3797
e-mail: bbrown@prairienet.org

Susan Cohen
3506 S. Vine, U 61802
384-7871 (h)
e-mail: s-cohen3@uiuc.edu

Rachael Dietkus
402 S. Race #6, U. 61801
e-mail: rdietkus@hotmail.com

Ed Dessen
2502 N. Cunningham, U 61801
328-2917
e-mail: farmlake1@aol.com

Harry Hilton
1513 Maplecrest, C 61821-4401
352-8372 (h), 333-2653 (o)
FAX: 244-0720
e-mail: h-hilton@uiuc.edu

Stuart Laird
306 N. State St. #6, C 61820
369-9612 (h)
e-mail: stuart@laird.com

Allan Levy
3 Lyndhurst Place, C 61820
359-8148 (h), 333-9181 (o)
e-mail: a-levy@uiuc.edu

Stan Levy
3006 Meadowbrook, C 61822
352-7103, 352-4277 (fax)
e-mail: s-levy1@uiuc.edu

Hiram Paley
706 W. California, U 61801
384-8165 (h), 333-1716 (o)
e-mail: h-paley@uiuc.edu

Esther Patt
706 S. Coler #3, U 61801
344-8394

e-mail: estherpatt@hotmail.com

Gary Peters
1502 W Springfield, C. 61821
398-2140
E-mail: colorgrain@sbcglobal.net

Steve Shoemaker
1148 County Rd. 1500 E, U. 61802
356-3636 (h), 337-1500 (o)
e-mail: sshoem3636@aol.com

Kristin Solberg
2001 S. Vine, U 61802
384-0000 (o)
e-mail: ksolberg@novaklaw.com

Cecile Steinberg
2606 Nottingham Ct. South
Champaign, IL 61821
359-2607
e-mail: ceciles@mhc.uiuc.edu

Victor Stone
1804 Pleasant, U 61801
367-7846 (h), 333-1843(o)
FAX: 367-6806
e-mail: vstone@law.uiuc.edu

Harvey Welch
302 W. Vermont, U 61801
337-0533 (h), 367-3200 (o)
e-mail: hcwincourt@aol.com

STUDENT CHAPTER:

Elliot DeVries
e-mail: edevries@uiuc.edu

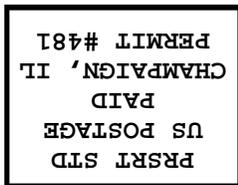
Maeve Anderson
e-mail: mmndrsn2@uiuc.edu

LAW SCHOOL CHAPTER:

Josh Rohrscheib
E-mail: eamackey@law.uiuc.edu

Elizabeth Mackey
E-mail: eamackey@law.uiuc.edu

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



American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois
Champaign County Chapter
P.O. Box 2651, Station A
Champaign, IL 61825-2651

2003-2004 CIVIL LIBERTIES AWARDEES NAMED

Congratulations and heartfelt thanks go to Clarence Shelley, Nancy Cantor and Hiram Paley for their vital work in the cause of Civil Liberties! Join us Sunday April 18th to honor these extraordinary individuals and hear more about their activities (see details inside).

Shelley was integral in establishing and ensuring the success of African-American recruitment efforts at the UI in the 60s and 70s. His efforts continue to improve the educational experience for all students by bringing diversity issues center-stage. Nancy Cantor didn't miss a beat during her brief time as UI Chancellor, increasing awareness of social responsibility while keeping campus priorities on-track and showing the community at large the value of public engagement. Hiram Paley will be leaving the Steering Committee after this year and we just wanted to say thanks for being such a hard working and involved, active member for all these years.



Victor J. Stone Award
for lifetime service
Clarence Shelley

W. Ellison Chalmers Award
*for exceptional contributions
to the local community*
Nancy Cantor

Horace W. Norton Award
for service to the Chapter
Hiram Paley

