

The Herland Legal Defense Fund

Protecting Parental Rights

Making Equality a Reality

In 1992, Herland was presented with a request for financial assistance from a lesbian mother who had lost custody of her two children as a result of the mother's sexual orientation. In response, Herland created the Legal Defense Fund (LDF) and began fundraising efforts to support the expenses of appeal.

The loss of custody experienced by the mother was overturned by the Oklahoma Supreme Court in July 1995 and *Fox v. Fox* set a resounding legal precedent to protect lesbian/gay parents against discrimination in child custody cases. In Oklahoma, sexual orientation can no longer be used in and of itself to deny a parent the right to raise her/his children. *Fox v. Fox* has since been used on numerous occasions to successfully stop attempts to take children away from their lesbian/gay parents.

As a result of their efforts in support of the *Fox v. Fox* appeal, Herland Sister Resources was recognized by the ACLU of Oklahoma with the 1997 Human Rights Award.

The Legal Defense Fund Outreach and Education Program

To promote the awareness and use of the *Fox v. Fox* precedent, the LDF's programs include an outreach and education program for lesbian/gay parents, social workers, clergy, and the legal community. The program includes:

- information and support for lesbians/gay men experiencing custody disputes
- detailed information on the *Fox v. Fox* case provided to requesting attorneys
- attorney referrals
- informational outreach to gay churches, social workers, and others likely to come into early contact with parents just entering a custody dispute

This outreach helps educate the community on the issues related to gay/lesbian custody cases and the availability of assistance.

Getting help from the Herland Legal Defense Fund

Initial requests for information may be made by leaving a message to the attention of the Legal Defense Fund. Requests for financial assistance are made in person to the LDF committee. Supporting documents (filings, judges rulings, etc.) are required and are reviewed by volunteer attorneys who advise the committee as to the potential for legal success.

Cases selected for assistance are those that can make effective use of existing positive lesbian precedents and, in appeal cases, those in which the judge's ruling can be construed as indicating that sexual orientation was a consideration in deciding the case.

Expert witness, filing fees, transcripts, and other litigation support expenses may be considered

for payment by the Defense Fund. Attorney fees will be paid only when there are specific fundraising efforts toward those fees.

The committee and its attorney review board will hold as confidential the identity of persons receiving support through the fund and all information about specific cases.

Inquiries about obtaining assistance may be made by calling Herland or by emailing us at *Herlandsisters@cox.net*.

How You Can Become Involved

The success of the Herland Legal Defense Fund requires the involvement and support of many individuals. Herland invites you to become involved by:

- **participating in fundraising activities**
- **suggesting cases for funding consideration**
- **offering your services** - volunteer attorneys are needed to review potential cases and for our attorney referral list

The LDF depends on the support of individuals like you who care about our legal and advocacy work. *Please consider making a generous tax-deductible contribution so we can continue working to secure the basic rights of lesbians and gays.*

About Herland Sister Resources

Herland is a nonprofit volunteer organization whose purpose is to support women in their journey toward self-definition and self determination. Herland was established in 1983 by a group of women activists concerned about the oppression of all women and lesbians in particular. Their mission, most simply stated, was to create a safe place for lesbians to meet and exchange ideas, feelings, hopes and fears and to learn about themselves and each other.

Herland works to educate individuals and expand community awareness about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (l/g/b/t) issues. We publish a monthly newsletter, operate a bookstore and lending library, and provide musical and cultural events for education and entertainment.

Herland works in collaboration with and supports the efforts of other l/g/b/t and minority organizations to eliminate racism, agism, sexism, and heterosexism.



Herland Sister Resources, Inc.
2312 N.W. 39th
Oklahoma City, OK 73112
Phone: (405) 521-9696

Or visit our web site at www.herlandsisters.org