Celebrating Solutions Awards
Nomination Form

Legal name of organization: Women’s Law Initiative

Program nominated for award (if different): WomensLaw.org

Address: 150 Court Street, 2nd floor

City/State/ZIP code: Brooklyn, NY 11201

Contact person: Adrienne Fowler

Title: Program Director

Phone number (718) 923-1400 ext. 270 Fax number (718) 923-2869

E-mail address: Adrienne@WomensLaw.org

Website address: www.WomensLaw.org

Description of organization:

Women’s Law Initiative is a non-profit organization that was founded with a goal of seeing the power of the internet work for survivors of domestic violence. The organization’s first project has been the creation of WomensLaw.org, a website that provides free, easy-to-understand legal information related to domestic violence for all 50 states and the District of Columbia, as well as the only national Email Legal Hotline for domestic violence.

Geographical area served: All 50 United States and the District of Columbia

Is organization tax-exempt under IRS 501 (c) (3) guidelines? Yes

If no, is your organization a public agency/unit of government? yes no

Signature of contact person: Adrienne Fowler

Date 9/1/04
Celebrating Solutions Award
Program Outline
WomensLaw.org

1. WomensLaw.org Mission:

The mission of WomensLaw.org is to provide easy-to-understand legal information and resources to women living with or escaping domestic violence. By reaching out through the Internet, we empower women and girls to lead independent lives, free from abuse.

2. WomensLaw.org’s Innovations:

WomensLaw.org is the only website with comprehensive domestic violence legal information for all fifty states and Washington, DC, making it a first-of-its-kind website that transforms technology into a powerful tool for social change. Founded in February 2000, WomensLaw.org provides 1) step-by-step instructions for obtaining restraining orders, listings for local assistance, links to court forms, and legal statutes for all 50 states and D.C.; 2) domestic violence legal information about teen dating violence, immigration, military law, tribal law, and custody; and 3) an Email Hotline providing direct support and specific information to survivors and advocates.

The site also publishes general information (not state-specific), including:

- glossary of legal terms
- legal information for interstate custody and parental kidnapping
- tips for safety planning and internet security
- links, annotated listings, and phone numbers for national domestic violence resources
- Spanish translations of the above

WomensLaw.org also hosts the only national Email Hotline for legal information about domestic violence. The Hotline provides anonymous support, referrals for local assistance, and answers to specific legal questions. This creates a first point of entry for many survivors who are not yet ready or able to call a crisis line or go to a shelter. WomensLaw.org can tailor responses to each woman’s specific situation and encourage her to contact community networks she might not know about.
Through the Email Hotline, we also support local domestic violence programs by answering their questions with immediate and reliable legal information. Often, local advocates do not have access to legal help for their clients and do not themselves have legal expertise. Also, their clients often present complicated, cross-state legal issues. As a centralized clearinghouse for legal information related to domestic violence, it is significantly easier and more cost effective for us to research the issues for them.

WomensLaw.org believes that creating large-scale change is possible with small-scale resources and creative ideas. Because WomensLaw.org is Internet-based, it operates efficiently with low overhead, requiring only a small staff. The Internet allows us to:

- update content immediately, so it is always up-to-date;
- provide comprehensive information in an easy-to-use format;
- leverage volunteers from long distances; and
- help unlimited numbers of survivors at almost no marginal cost.

3. Program implementation. Barriers WomensLaw.org overcame? Marshalling the necessary resources for implementation?

WomensLaw.org was founded in February 2000 by a group of lawyers, teachers, activists, and web designers interested in seeing the power of the internet work for survivors of domestic violence. The founding Board of Directors pulled together their experiences and resources and launched the WomensLaw.org website in October 2001.

WomensLaw.org faced several challenges during the implementation of its website:

- gathering the state-specific statutes, lists of resources, and restraining order procedural information for all 50 states;
- presenting the content on the site in a way that was both user-friendly and easily maintained and updated, and
- reaching out to other organizations, resource centers, funders, and web search engines to make the website visible and accessible to as many people as possible.

The launch of the website could not have been accomplished without the countless hours of work donated by the team of people who were committed to getting the site up and running. The task of gathering the content for the site was accomplished by tapping into the
knowledge and experience of lawyers familiar with legal research. This group also reached out to other lawyers and domestic violence experts in each state for help in gathering information.

Web and graphic designers donated their design expertise to create the sleek, easy-to-navigate website that is also simple to maintain and update.

The huge task of networking and getting listed on search engines is an ongoing project, but one which was first tackled early on in WomensLaw.org’s inception by the team of people committed to making WomensLaw.org a reality. Many of those people still serve on the Board of Directors and have repeatedly tapped into their own professional networks to introduce WomensLaw.org to other domestic violence-related organizations, legal aid providers, and funders. By both applying to be included on many major search engines and getting WomensLaw.org linked on many domestic violence websites throughout the country, the site is now easily accessible throughout the web.

4. How do you know your program works? Please cite two examples.

Illustrating its reach, with its small staff of two, WomensLaw.org currently attracts more than 14,000 unique users per month and responds to over 2,000 emails annually to its Email Hotline. These numbers continue to grow monthly.

The Email Hotline is proving to be a powerful tool that continues to grow. Excerpts from the Email Hotline illustrate the impact of WomensLaw.org:

- “Thank you! Many times I never stood up for myself, but I filed my first police report last night with no clue what to do next. So, I turned to the Internet and found your heart-sent site. I now feel empowered instead of afraid.” –Survivor
- “Just from talking to you, I have built up a little strength and I know they sense it.... My attitude has been stronger and they are getting the picture that I’m not just gonna lie down for this. Thanks to you, I’ve been reading my brains out, armed with some of your vocabulary. It’s really amazing to me, how much more empowered I feel with the support you’ve offered me. I was starting to feel the urge to just curl up on the couch and sleep. Since emailing with you, I’ve rallied up all kinds of strength, which has led to all kinds of info, which has led to my not wanting to curl up and
sleep anymore. And I'll NEVER be able to express my gratitude to the level that you
deserve. Thank you.” - Survivor

- "Just wanted to let you know how much I appreciate your website. Our entire office
uses it. Thank you for a much needed service.” - Legal Aid Attorney

5. Who are your key partners? What are their roles?

Efforts over the past year to build stronger and more wide-spread partnerships throughout
the domestic violence community have borne fruit. In addition to the partnerships
highlighted below, WomensLaw.org works closely with statewide and local coalitions
against domestic violence, courthouses, and legal aid providers in all 50 states and
Washington, D.C. to keep the state-specific content of the site relevant and up-to-date.

- Since July 2003, WomensLaw.org has been housed in the offices of the Blue Ridge
Foundation New York. Blue Ridge Foundation New York operates a Venture
Philanthropy Fund to support social change organizations. The office space, resources,
and connections with other nonprofits – all provided by Blue Ridge – helps
WomensLaw.org work more efficiently and with fewer overall costs.

- WomensLaw.org is working with the Texas Council on Family Violence, the
organization that runs the National Domestic Violence Hotline (NDVH) to ensure that
callers needing legal information are directed to WomensLaw.org. The NDVH will be
establishing a new protocol for their hotline telephone counselors which will include
WomensLaw.org as a top resource referral for every caller who has any legal question or
need.

- Now in its second year, our partnership with Lifetime Television continues to grow. This
year Lifetime committed to assisting WomensLaw.org with its marketing campaign by
printing informational postcards and by including WomensLaw.org as a “Partners
Against Violence” organization. This year, as part of their 20th Anniversary - Celebrating
Women Campaign, Lifetime is airing a 30-second television spot about
WomensLaw.org’s Executive Director, Elizabeth Martin. LifetimeTV.com includes a
link to WomensLaw.org, which increases traffic to the site. The network also hosted a
WomensLaw.org film screening for Domestic Violence Awareness Month last year and
donated silent auction items for WomensLaw.org fundraisers.
• WomensLaw.org and ProBono.Net have entered into a partnership to share technology and relationships with local service providers to help both organizations serve clients more effectively throughout the country.

• The search engine, Google.com has offered WomensLaw.org the opportunity to place a free advertisement on the Google site. Each time a user types in a WomensLaw.org keyword, a link to WomensLaw.org appears as a sponsored link. This partnership is proving invaluable to WomensLaw.org by directing an increased number of users to the site.

• WomensLaw.org is also working with the National Network to End Domestic Violence, a national coalition of statewide coalitions against domestic violence, exploring technology and safety for victims. This partnership also has created the opportunity to connect in a more formal way with statewide coalitions to seek their input and feedback on the website.

• This summer, WomensLaw.org launched its Rural Advisory Committee consisting of program advocates in rural areas throughout the country. This committee is helping develop a plan to ensure that WomensLaw.org addresses the unique needs of rural survivors and that women in rural communities know about the website and how to access its services.

6. Could/should WomensLaw.org be replicated in other areas of the country? Why?

WomensLaw.org is already a national organization, providing information and resources to domestic violence victims and advocates throughout the country. WomensLaw.org is exploring ways of strengthening partnerships with local and state programs so that they can take ownership of the content on the WomensLaw.org site and tailor it to the specific needs of that state. We have seen the benefit of this model in an exciting partnership with Alaska. The Alaska Network Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault took “ownership” of the Alaska pages and worked with WomensLaw.org staff to update the information and provide a level of information tailored to Alaska residents that had yet to be achieved by WomensLaw.org staff working alone. We hope to use this partnership as a model as we work to continually improve and deepen the content of information available to survivors, their family, their friends and their advocates.
WomensLaw.org

General questions
a. What is the approximate number of individuals served annually by the applicant or nominee?

In 2004:
- Over 150,000 individuals visited the WomensLaw.org website.
- Those individuals visited the website over 380,000 times.
- WomensLaw.org staff researched and responded to 3030 emails from victims and advocates through its email legal hotline.

These numbers grow dramatically, each month, and we anticipate a significant increase in 2005. Below is a chart showing monthly totals of website traffic for October and April since the site was launched in October 2001.

![Chart showing monthly website traffic](chart.png)

Email traffic to our email legal hotline also continues to grow. Currently, WomensLaw.org responds to over 350 emails each month. Eighty percent (80%) of these are from individuals needing help for themselves. The remaining twenty percent (20%) are from friends, family members, and advocates seeking information for victims in need.
b. Are there past awards, accolades, and grants furnished upon the applicant or nominee that would further exemplify its success in combating domestic violence?

WomensLaw.org is proud to be a recipient of recent grants and awards from the following foundations, corporations and organizations:

1. Blue Ridge Foundation New York selected WomensLaw.org as a portfolio organization in July 2003 and provides financial assistance, back-end office support, and ideas for strategic planning.

2. WomensLaw.org was awarded a grant of free Google AdWords advertising through the Google Grants program in May 2004. Now, when anyone searches for any of our key words on Google, the link for WomensLaw.org pops up on the right hand side of the search page.

3. The Valentine Foundation has honored WomensLaw.org for two consecutive years with a grant for its project to improve outreach and online service to victims in rural communities. This grant is especially meaningful because The Valentine Foundation responded generously to our letter of inquiry sent "cold" and has been very supportive of our work. They understand the particular issues facing rural victims and how WomensLaw.org and its email hotline can help address their needs.

4. Lifetime Television honored Elizabeth Martin, Executive Director of WomensLaw.org in 2004 as part of their 20th Anniversary - Celebrating Women Campaign. Throughout the year, Lifetime aired a 30-second television spot about Elizabeth and WomensLaw.org, which also served to let many more women know about our program. Also, in 2004, Lifetime highlighted WomensLaw.org in its monthly newsletter to over 500,000 recipients. Lifetime also designed and produced a promotional postcard for WomensLaw.org and continues to serve as an important partner of ours.

5. In August 2004, Elizabeth Martin also received the Sunshine Lady Foundation Peace Award, recognizing the work of WomensLaw.org. WomensLaw.org is very proud to be affiliated with the Sunshine Lady Foundation and the many incredible women honored by this award.
6. WomensLaw.org is also honored by the participation of our Board of Advisors and Rural Advisory Committee. The Board of Advisors includes:

- Sheryl Cates, National Domestic Violence Hotline/Texas Council on Family Violence
- Judge Janice Martin, Jefferson, KY District Court Judge
- Darren Mitchell, Legal Resource Center on Violence Against Women
- Dr. Beth Richie, Department of African American Studies, Univ. of Illinois at Chicago
- Lynn Rosenthal, National Network to End Domestic Violence
- Esta Soler, Family Violence Prevention Fund
- Debby Tucker, National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence
- Joan Zorza, Sexual Assault Report and Domestic Violence Report

The Rural Advisory Committee includes:

- Sarah Deer, Tribal Law and Policy Institute (Tribal/National)
- Jackie Goodwin, Families Living Violence Free (NC)
- Donna Mathews, ABA Commission on Domestic Violence
- Dona Playton, Univ. of WY Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project (WY)
- Kari Robinson, Alaska Network against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (AK)
- Carissa Rosen, NM Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NM)
- Lisa Velker, Crisis Intervention Services (WY)
- Lydia Walker, Consultant (AR)
- Winona Ward, Have Justice Will Travel (VT)

7. While this recognition is important, our most vital accolades come from victims and advocates directly. Here are excerpts from two emails we recently received (identifying information changed):

I don't know if I am strong, but it's very encouraging to hear it from you. It is very hard to do this. My gut tells me he is very dangerous, because of his guns. It's nice to have someone to write to that takes this very seriously. (From a survivor)

The information on your website, especially the part about protective orders and how to prepare for the hearing, is extremely valuable. That is exactly what I was looking for when I contacted the police (even though I knew they didn't serve my rural area). They didn't have any resources on preparing for the hearing. So, I
will share your website with them so they can share it with other victims of domestic violence. Thank you! Thank you!! Thank you!! (From a Survivor)

c. How will the agency use the Celebrating Solutions Award funding?
WomensLaw.org will use the Celebrating Solutions Award funding to help support a project addressing domestic violence in rural communities. This project is called **Breaking Isolation: Rural Community Outreach and Online Service.** Survivors in rural communities typically have far fewer resources and far greater obstacles, and they often experience a unique and terrifying form of isolation. The Internet has the power to address these issues in new ways. Rural households are now coming online in increasing numbers, and as survivors turn to the Internet with questions, we should be there with the answers and support they need.

Currently, approximately thirty-five percent (35%) of our users come from rural communities. We would like to increase this number by providing greater outreach and new information specifically relevant to rural survivors. We have already established a Rural Advisory Committee to help us improve our service. This committee is comprised of advocates from rural states, including Alaska, Arkansas, New Mexico, North Carolina, Vermont, and Wyoming. This committee has already made suggestions for new information for the site, many of which we would be able to implement with the funding from this award.

I am attaching here a copy of the letter we wrote to The Valentine Foundation to introduce them to the rural project. It provides a little more background about why we think this is important.

**Specific questions for WomensLaw.org**

1. **How do you track changes in laws and procedural rules across the 50 states? How frequently is your information updated in the database?**

The staff of WomensLaw.org works in conjunction with advocates across the country to keep the information on our site complete and up-to-date. These advocates include public policy directors at state coalitions against domestic violence, law school professors who run domestic violence legal clinics, legal advocacy staff at local domestic violence programs, and family court judges. No new information is posted on the website until it has been reviewed by at least one of these local experts.
Once we have posted information for a state, we update it regularly. As soon as possible after the close of the legislative session in each state, WomensLaw.org reviews the changes to each state’s laws. We then make changes to the information on our website accordingly. The website is designed so that all staff can make changes to it immediately, without a Webmaster or technology expert.

When any substantive changes are made to the legal information on the website, we once again contact our local experts in each state for their review. These experts tell us how new or modified laws are actually being implemented, along with any changes to procedure, and they review all our information for accuracy.

We also maintain our relationships with local advocates so they can alert us immediately to any changes to laws and procedural rules, prior to the close of the legislative session.

2. What processes are in place to “test” the accuracy of the information posted?

As explained above, all our information is reviewed by a local expert before being posted on the website, and all changes and updates to that information are also reviewed. The legal information pages that are not state-specific, such as the pages on custody and kidnapping, immigration law, tribal law, military law, and teen dating violence, were all written in conjunction with experts in those fields. New information pages will always be written with the assistance of experts.

Once information is posted, we regularly review it for clarity, as well as for legal updates as explained above.

Our optional user questionnaire is also used to identify sections of the website that are confusing to people, so that we can go back and revise those sections for clarity. For example, we are in the process of revising our page on immigration law to make it easier to read and understand. We are breaking it into several pages and drafting new, clearer language.
3. How did your partnership in Alaska occur? Are you taking steps to actively recruit other states to similar sponsorship?

WomensLaw.org has contacts in every state, and for most states, these contacts are in statewide coalitions against domestic violence. When we began drafting the Alaska pages of the website several years ago, we contacted the Alaska Network on Domestic and Sexual Violence for their assistance. The advocates there immediately expressed their enthusiasm about WomensLaw.org. They saw the Internet as an important way to reach victims throughout their state. They told us that while many people living in rural Alaska do not have running water or indoor plumbing, they do have access to the Internet through their community centers. There are very few resources in these isolated towns and villages, and the Internet provides them with a window to the outside world. We were eager to tap into the enthusiasm of the Alaska advocates and began working closely with them to draft new pages of information for their state.

Because of this experience, we have been working toward developing similar relationships with advocates in other states. We have worked directly with the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV), which is a coalition of state coalitions. The staff of NNEDV has been very supportive of WomensLaw.org and has helped us reach out and develop closer relationships with advocates in state coalitions.

We also have been working to develop relationships with legal advocates in each state through our partnership with Pro Bono Net. Pro Bono Net operates a website called LawHelp.org. The LawHelp.org website provides state-specific information about legal resources for low and moderate income people with legal problems. To develop content for the state pages of LawHelp.org, Pro Bono Net works directly with advocates at statewide legal aid programs. Our partnership with Pro Bono Net has allowed us to reach out to their network of legal and domestic violence experts, as well.

Our experience with the Alaska advocates also led us to develop the rural project, described above. A key component of the rural project is to work directly with advocates in rural states and in rural communities to develop new information for the website, according to their priorities. For example, currently, we are working closely with Dona Playton at the Wyoming Coalition Against Domestic Violence to build out the pages of the WY section of WomensLaw.org. We plan to continue to replicate this model with all 50 states and U.S. territories.
WomensLaw.org recognizes that our expertise lies in legal research, writing legal information in a plain language, and publishing on the Internet. We rely on local and state partners for their expertise in identifying legal priorities for victims in their state and explaining how the laws are actually being enforced.

4. How is your staff for the email hotline trained?
Elizabeth Martin, Executive Director, and Adrienne Fowler, Program Director, staff the WomensLaw.org email hotline. Elizabeth supervises and is the managing attorney for the hotline.

Elizabeth received her JD from the University of North Carolina in 1998, and she is licensed to practice law in North Carolina. Her experience in working with survivors began when she volunteered as a crisis counselor at WomenCare, a domestic violence organization in Washington State. There she received training to be a telephone counselor and on-call crisis advocate. Elizabeth also worked as a Staff Attorney for domestic violence cases at Pisgah Legal Services in rural North Carolina, led a law school Domestic Violence Project conducting community outreach and court assistance to victims, and served as a pro bono attorney in domestic violence cases while working as an Associate at Kilpatrick Stockton LLP in Charlotte, NC.

Adrienne began working with domestic violence survivors and cultivated an interest in family law at the Women's Law Project in Philadelphia, where she served as Senior Telephone Counselor for their legal information hotline. There she also trained new telephone counselors and helped supervise legal volunteers. Adrienne has undergone the standard 40-hour training for working with survivors of domestic violence and has over two years of experience offering legal information to survivors, with the supervision and training of attorneys at the Women's Law Project and WomensLaw.org.
March 2, 2005

Marica L. Roth  
Executive Director  
Celebrating Solutions Awards  
Mary Byron Foundations  
10401 Linn Station Road  
Louisville, KY 40223

Dear Ms. Roth,

I am the Executive Director of the Blue Ridge Foundation New York (Blue Ridge). Blue Ridge supports start-up nonprofit organizations in New York City by providing funding, strategic assistance, office space, back-office support, and a community of grantee non-profits. WomensLaw.org has been a Blue Ridge “portfolio organization” since July 2003.

WomensLaw.org is a model for the efficient use of technology to meet survivors’ needs. Because WomensLaw.org is entirely Internet-based, they operate efficiently with low overhead, requiring only a small staff. The Internet allows them to update content easily, provide comprehensive information in an easy-to-use format, leverage volunteers from long distances, and help unlimited numbers of survivors at almost no marginal cost. Providing this nationwide resource on one website is significantly more cost-effective than other methods of printing and disseminating information, and is more cost-effective than if each state published and managed its own parallel site. It also allows one centralized portal for information, a key aspect for the many survivors of domestic violence who face legal issues in more than one state.

Their focus on the innovative use of technology encouraged Blue Ridge to become one of WomensLaw.org’s first funders; their commitment to continually increasing their impact has turned Blue Ridge into a long-term supporter. Through their email legal information hotline, WomensLaw.org is able to accomplish the two-fold goal of directly aiding survivors and identifying gaps in the content they provide. For example, as the email hotline received more and more questions about child custody, WomensLaw.org undertook writing plain-language custody content for each state, filling a need that survivors clearly had. Through ongoing conversations with local advocates, WomensLaw.org is able to adapt to the particular needs of a given group of people. They have a Rural Advisory Committee, which is currently exploring how WomensLaw.org can help rural survivors overcome the unique barriers that they face. They have also worked with state-specific groups, such as the Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (ANDVSA), who created content for WomensLaw.org. This partnership
enabled WomensLaw.org to provide more comprehensive information and ANDVSA to reach more survivors. These efforts to expand the impact of WomensLaw.org continue to make supporting the organization a high priority for Blue Ridge.

WomensLaw.org is truly a solution worth celebrating. Given the focus of WomensLaw.org on efficiency and continual improvement, I have every confidence that an award from the Mary Byron Foundation would lead to a significant, positive impact for survivors of domestic violence. I am honored to support WomensLaw.org for this award.

Please do not hesitate to be in contact if I can provide you with any additional information helpful to your selection process.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Matt Klein
Executive Director
Blue Ridge Foundation New York
March 3, 2005

Marcia L. Roth
Executive Director
Celebrating Solutions Awards
Mary Byron Foundations
10401 Linn Station Road
Louisville, KY 40223

Dear Ms. Roth,

I am the Executive Director of the Texas Council on Family Violence and the National Domestic Violence Hotline. Since its inception in 1996, the Hotline has answered more than 100,000,000 phone calls from victims of domestic violence, family members and friends from all over the world. Currently, more than 13,000 callers reach out to the Hotline every month for crisis intervention, referrals and general information about domestic violence.

Not surprisingly, one of the critical issues facing the victims who call our Hotline is a lack of access to legal information. Sixteen percent of the victims who contact us seek legal help. And one of the top three problems consistently identified by our callers is access to legal assistance. Prior to WomensLaw.org, that legal information was hard to come by.

The Hotline’s response to callers with legal needs is to connect them with help in their communities. Sometimes the Hotline can connect victims with lawyers at legal aid, but the vast majority of women who call us do not qualify for legal aid either because they are not poor enough, or because their case does not fit in the necessarily tight guidelines of most legal aid programs. For women who do not qualify for legal aid, most also cannot afford to pay for a private attorney.

The Hotline also refers victims to advocates in local shelters and other domestic violence organizations. These advocates help with crisis counseling, safety planning, and many other issues, but they do not have the time or expertise to sort through the tricky legal situations of their clients or stay abreast of the latest changes in the laws.

WomensLaw.org addresses these issues by providing a website with plain-language translations of the law, and step-by-step procedures so that women can access the court system, and protect their rights, even without the help of a lawyer. WomensLaw.org also provides assistance through its email legal hotline, researching and answering questions specific to each victim’s situation. The website and email legal hotline assist thousands of victims directly each month, and also provide important support to advocates, as they assist their clients with their legal needs.
Because we believe in the work of WomensLaw.org and because it is an important complement to our work, the Hotline is revising its script for phone counselors and will be listing WomensLaw.org as the top resource for anyone who calls with a legal question, anywhere in the country. This way, the Hotline will be able to help countless more women find the legal information and support they need through WomensLaw.org.

WomensLaw.org provides this legal information for all 50 states and Washington, DC and is adding information for the U.S. territories this year. For victims and their advocates, it is an invaluable resource. For the National Domestic Violence Hotline, WomensLaw.org gives us a critical resource to pass on to the thousands and thousands of women who call with legal needs, throughout the country.

This young organization has filled an important gap in the field of domestic violence services. The staff of WomensLaw.org are committed to serving victims of domestic violence and are creative and clear in their approach. I have had the opportunity to advise and work directly with Elizabeth Martin, the Executive Director, and am pleased to serve on the WomensLaw.org Board of Advisors. As a longtime advocate for victims of domestic violence, I am honored to recommend WomensLaw.org for the Mary Byron Foundation’s Celebrating Solutions Award.

Please let me know if I can provide any further information to assist you in your selection process. I can be reached by telephone at 512-794-1133.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Sheryl Cates
Executive Director
Texas Council on Family Violence
National Domestic Violence Hotline
February 28, 2005

Marcia L. Roth
Executive Director
Celebrating Solutions Awards
Mary Byron Foundation
10401 Linn Station Road
Louisville, KY 40223

Dear Ms. Roth:

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to support WomensLaw.org for the Mary Byron Foundation’s Celebrating Solutions Award. I have worked with Elizabeth Martin, the Executive Director of WomensLaw.org, for the last two years, and believe that the organization, and ultimately the thousands of victims it serves, would benefit greatly as a recipient of this award.

Pro Bono Net, along with WomensLaw.org, is a national leader in creating legal information websites. Pro Bono Net provides two primary websites: 1) probono.net, a website with resources, information, and an online community for lawyers taking pro bono cases, and 2) LawHelp.org, a comprehensive website with state-specific resource listings and information for low and middle income people, covering an array of legal issues.

WomensLaw.org and Pro Bono Net currently work together to link resources, share content and contacts, and develop joint projects. We share a commitment to using technology to improve access to justice and believe that working together we can impact far more lives.

Providing victims with legal services and legal support is a critical component in reducing domestic violence. Survivors of domestic violence often have multiple, complex, and interrelated legal needs including emergency safety, housing, public benefits, immigration, family law, and many others.

WomensLaw.org has had the vision to address these legal needs through creative use of the Internet and by developing high quality content. Its website provides legal information about restraining orders, custody, divorce, immigration, teen dating violence, military law, and tribal law, as well as local resource listings. Through the email legal hotline, the staff of WomensLaw.org research and respond to specific questions from victims and advocates about the legal issues they face. Both the website and email hotline enable victims to access comprehensive, up-to-date information, anonymously, safely, and easily.
WomensLaw.org understands the power of technology to transform lives, and the power of using small-scale resources to effect large-scale change. They began work with no funding, but launched the initial website through the time, resources, and expertise of a committed, volunteer staff and Board. Through persistent research and outreach and strong alliances with several partner organizations, WomensLaw.org has now become the central location on the Internet for legal information for victims of domestic violence. As they move forward, the staff and Board of WomensLaw.org have far-reaching goals, with clear plans for reaching those goals. Pro Bono Net is proud to be part of those plans.

I am honored to support WomensLaw.org for the Celebrating Solutions award and would welcome any further questions you may have. Please contact me anytime at 212-760-2554 x479 or by email at mhertz@probono.net.

Sincerely,

Michael Hertz
President and Founder
Pro Bono Net