



# Lilith's Voice

Lilith Fund Newsletter

Fall, 2001

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**Coming Soon:**  
Visit our website  
for upcoming  
events, news &  
volunteer  
opportunities  
[www.lilithfund.org](http://www.lilithfund.org)

## We've Only Just Begun

It's hard to believe it's already been six months since a group of pro-choice activists in the Austin area came together to establish the Lilith Fund. Just this February, we were sitting around a table trying to come up with a name. Since then, we have had a fundraising event to celebrate the launch of the fund; co-sponsored the Pro-Choice Week of Action at UT; hosted a screening and discussion of the film "Legal, But Out of Reach;" attended the National Network of Abortion Funds Conference; participated in a public forum on Abortion Access hosted by the ACLU of Texas; attended the NOW National Conference; hosted a yard sale; and signed on as a 'friend of the court' in a lawsuit challenging Texas' restriction of Medicaid funding for abortion.

While abortion has been legal since 1973, there are many women and girls who cannot afford to choose abortion. The Lilith Fund was established to meet the needs of these women. We believe that reproductive freedom is a fundamental right and that a women's decision of whether or not to have a child shouldn't be based upon her financial means.

Lilith is governed by a 13-member volunteer Board of Directors. Each board member brings different strengths to the group from various volunteer and career backgrounds. We have no salaried positions and rely heavily on the support and involvement of the community as a whole and thus are constantly striving to build coalitions with other progressive groups and raise funds through grassroots fundraising efforts.

The urgent need for the Fund was clear as soon as we set up a toll-free number. Al-

though we had not yet done any community outreach, we immediately began receiving calls from women in need of financial assistance. Unfortunately, the demand for financial assistance has been greater than our resources. Currently, we are only able to assist women with financial counseling and referrals, but we hope to be able to

provide funds soon. Please see the contribution form on the back page for details on how you can help us begin helping women with financial assistance.

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**No woman should have  
to endure an unwanted  
pregnancy just because  
she doesn't have the  
money to make another  
CHOICE.**

### Board of Directors:

Heather Busby, *President*  
Emily Cowley, *Vice-President*  
Chevit Meerdink, *Treasurer*  
Tish Garcia, *Secretary*

Amanda Acklin  
Cindy Beringer  
Melissa DeHaan  
Bryan Hadley  
Amy Juried  
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Lesley Ramsey  
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Katy Stein

## October is Abortion Access Month

Since the Roe v. Wade decision in 1973, American women have seen their hard-won right to choose erode due to the increasing difficulties in obtaining a safe abortion. Restrictive legislation, judicial decisions, decreasing abortion services and cuts in abortion funding have substantially inhibited comprehensive reproductive health care, both in Texas and at the national level.

Although all the restrictions on abortion access have severely inhibited low-income women's access to abortion, lack of funding has had the greatest impact on the availability of abortion for these women. The Hyde Amendment, passed in 1977, prohibits federal Medicaid funding except in cases of life endangerment. Exceptions for rape and in-

cest were added in 1993. Abortion is the only reproductive health care service Medicaid doesn't cover. Most states, including Texas, followed the lead of the federal government in Hyde, by cutting state funds as well.

For some women, denying coverage for abortion services is the same as banning it outright. It is conservatively estimated that one in five Medicaid-eligible women seeking an abortion is unable to obtain one. Those who are successful in obtaining an abortion are forced to divert money from other essentials such as food and rent, carry an unwanted pregnancy to term, seek a back alley abortion, or attempt to induce an abortion themselves. These restrictions are also forcing women to have abortions later in

*(Continued on page 3)*

## GET INVOLVED!

Lilith needs help with the following:

- Help at the Fall Concert Benefit on Sun, October 28th
- Help at the Garden Party on Sun, October 21st
- Host a House Party
- Grant Writing
- Fundraising
- Tabling at fun events.
- And much more!

## Lilith In The Community

Since we started Lilith in February, we've been busy! Here's a glimpse of what we have done...

- **Lilith Launch**—On May 3rd Lilith celebrated the fund's launch at Miguel's La Bodega with music performed by Correo Aereo. The Launch was a great success and we wish to thank those who helped with the event as well as those who have given generously to the Lilith Fund. We hope all who attended had a memorable evening.
- **NNAF Conference**—Board Members Amy Juried, Chevit Meerdink & Lesley Ramsey attended the National Network of Abortion Funds Conference in Memphis this June where they participated in many great workshops & had an opportunity to talk with other women & men who work on abortion funds in the U.S.
- **NOW National Conference**—Board Members Chevit Meerdink & Lesley Ramsey attended the NOW National Conference in Philadelphia at the end of June. Lesley wrote a "Universal Living Wage" resolution, which was passed. And Chevit was instrumental in adding the issue of access to a resolution calling for a mass "Action to Protect & Advance Roe."
- **Abortion Access Panel**—On August 31st the ACLU of Texas hosted a Public Forum on Access to Abortion. Chevit Meerdink, along with Diana Philip of Jane's Due Process, participated on the panel. The discussion was filmed and will be aired on Public Access at a time TBA. We will let you know via email as soon as it is scheduled.
- **Brackenridge/Seton**—Lilith, in coalition with other local health care advocates and supporters of women's reproductive rights, has been active in the fight to keep reproductive services on site at Brackenridge, Austin's only public hospital. Board members have participated in meetings with the city council, city managers, and organized Town Hall meetings.
- **Bost v. Low-Income Women of Texas**—Lilith has signed on as an *amicus* (friend of the court) in support of Medicaid funding for abortion in Texas.

## We've Only Just Begun

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These are some stories from women who have contacted us for assistance.

*Kate* a single parent, found out she was pregnant after having a baby six months prior. She was having a hard time financially and emotionally. Her husband left her and their 3-year-old daughter when she was pregnant with her second child. After the baby was born, he wanted to get back together, so she gave him another chance and got pregnant again. He then left her for a second time.

*Tara* called us when she was 17 weeks pregnant. She was on Medicaid, lived alone & was 3 months behind on her rent due to an illness, which prevented her from working. All of her utilities had been shut off. She had an ultrasound and saved up the \$380 she needed for her abortion at 15 weeks gestation. When she went to the clinic, the ultrasound revealed that she was 17 weeks and it would cost \$700. She told us, "I really need your help if it is only \$50 it will be greatly appreciated. I am willing to pay it back. If you can't help me I just want to say thank you so much for trying."

*Rita* contacted us believing that she was between 10-14 weeks along in her pregnancy. A full-time student, she didn't have money and felt none of her friends and family would be supportive of her decision to have an abortion. She had just found out about abortion assistance funds and knew that every week the cost would increase. She told us, "I could even get a part time job to repay the cost as soon as possible, I am just afraid I am running out of time... if not already."

It is an honor to be able to work with and assist these women. But there is still more to be done. We have raised a third of our fundraising goal for this year. With your help, we will make sure that women in Texas can make the choice that's best for them.

## FALL CONCERT BENEFIT

PLEASE JOIN US FOR A WORLD MUSIC CONCERT EVENT

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 28TH, 7:00-11:00 P.M.

EMPANADA PARLOUR, 709 E. 6TH

FEATURING MUSIC BY:

• **Divahn**

• **Ojalá**

• **Rajamani Trio** featuring Oliver Rajamani, formerly of the Gypsy Kings

DONATION TICKET PRICE:

\$8 PER PERSON IN ADVANCE, \$10 AT THE DOOR

TO PURCHASE TICKETS:

Call us at 877-659-4304 or Email [lilith@nnaf.org](mailto:lilith@nnaf.org)



## October is Abortion Access Month

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their pregnancies because they must take time to gather the money to pay for an abortion, when the cost of these more complicated abortion procedures are higher.

According to The Alan Guttmacher Institute, "National public opinion polls have long shown that the majority of Americans support a woman's right to choose abortion...." However, "...many Americans apparently believe that abortions are 'too easy' to obtain." As a result of this belief, more and more legislation is passed to restrict access to abortions. While these laws do make it harder for all women to obtain an abortion, the impact on low-income women has been devastating.

Restrictive legislation, such as parental consent or notification laws and mandatory waiting periods, impose additional financial burdens and time constraints that especially impact low-income women and girls. As a result of parental consent and notification laws, some women are forced to travel to other states or resort to illegal abortions. Mandatory waiting periods increase the costs for rural women who may have to take time off work, arrange for childcare, travel long distances and/or stay overnight.

At the same time, abortion has become marginalized within the medical profession, resulting in a decline in abortion providers since the 1980s. Currently, 93% of Texas counties have no abortion provider and most are located in metropolitan areas. Yet the demand for services remains constant – approximately 43% of American women will have at least one abortion during their lives.

Several factors, including anti-choice threats and violence, have contributed to the shortage of abortion providers. Opportunities for training have decreased – only 12% of ob/gyn residency programs require training in first trimester abortions. Abortion is the most common ob/gyn surgical procedure in the U.S. today, yet one-half of ob/gyn residents have never performed one.

Abortion services at hospitals have decreased, which further limits access for rural and low-income women. The trend of

hospitals merging with Catholic and other religious institutions has resulted in a dramatic decrease or elimination of reproductive health services. Under the *Religious and Ethical Directives for Catholic Health Care Services*, Catholic hospitals are prohibited from providing contraception, sterilization, most infertility treatments, condom distribution for AIDS prevention, and abortion services.

### The Lilith Fund

Lilith was established in order to increase low-income women's access to abortion. While our ultimate goal is to restore Medicaid funding for abortion without restrictions, we are working to make access a reality for all women, regardless of age, ethnicity or economic status. While lack of funding is key, the women who seek financial assistance have multiple problems leading them to their decision. Lilith respects each woman's decision to seek an abortion. We don't evaluate a woman's reasons for wanting an abortion; women seeking assistance only have to demonstrate financial need.

### Provider Appreciation

So many providers, in the face of harassment and other obstacles, express that their work goes unrecognized and unsupported by the pro-choice majority they serve.

We would like to kick off Abortion Access Month by thanking the few providers in Texas who provide abortions. Lilith is soliciting pro-choice individuals and organizations to lend their names to thank you cards so we can acknowledge the important work of these providers.

If you are willing to add your name (or the name of your organization or business) to the list, please email us at [lilith@nnaf.org](mailto:lilith@nnaf.org) or call us at 877-659-4304 before September 30<sup>th</sup>. Please take a moment to get back to us.

Let your appreciation be known!

### Join Lilith's Pro-Choice Email List

The Lilith Fund has an e-mail alert list. Many people have already signed up to receive announcements of local pro-choice happenings, invitations to events, and alerts. This is not a listserve, so there is no cross discussion among participants.

Messages tend to be short, to the point and low in frequency.

Please send an email to [lilith@nnaf.org](mailto:lilith@nnaf.org) with the subject "Join" if you are interested in joining the list.

## A Book Can Help a Woman in Need

Think of how much money could go to the Lilith Fund if supporters bought books at [www.iGive.com/lilith](http://www.iGive.com/lilith), where up to 25% of every purchase is donated to the Lilith Fund! At iGive.com, membership is free! So hurry up and visit the Mall at iGive.com, where you can shop at 240+ stores for all your favorite stuff. Do your book shopping at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com), [BarnesandNoble.com](http://BarnesandNoble.com), [Powells.com](http://Powells.com) and [Booksamillion.com](http://Booksamillion.com), and you'll be helping the Lilith Fund with no extra costs or obligations to you or us.



Yes, I believe that a legal right to an abortion is not enough! I want ALL women to have access to abortion.

Enclosed is my gift in the amount of:

\$50  \$75  \$150  \$300  \$1,000  Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to become a sustaining sponsor of Lilith in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ per month. I have enclosed

*A gift at this level will help one woman afford an abortion.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (H) \_\_\_\_\_ (W) \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

List my name as a contributor.  I prefer to be listed as an anonymous contributor.

Please keep me informed about access to reproductive health care & events. Add my email to the alert listserve.

Please contact me about volunteering opportunities.

I am enclosing names and addresses of people who may be interested in supporting Lilith.

Please make your tax-deductible gift to Lilith Fund, Inc. and mail to:

Lilith Fund, Inc  
PO Box 200662  
Austin, TX 78720-0662



Please detach here and return bottom portion with your tax-deductible gift to Lilith Fund, Inc.



PO Box 200662  
Austin, TX 78720-0662

*Upcoming Event:*

**Fall Concert Benefit**

**Sunday, Oct. 28th**

**7:00-11:00 p.m.**

**Empanada Parlour**