

BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
David F. Abernethy, Esq.  
Catherine T. Barbieri, Esq. (Chair)  
Jessica Beckett-McWalter, Esq.  
Stephanie Bellamy, Esq.  
Robin Coward, Esq.  
Gerianne DiPiano  
Nancy O'Mara Ezold, Esq.  
Kenya Mann Faulkner, Esq.  
Amy Frazier  
Margaret F. Goldfarb  
Vicki W. Kramer  
Sophia Lee, Esq.  
Paul Messing, Esq.  
Leslie Anne Miller, Esq.  
Laval Miller-Wilson, Esq.  
Kimberly Mutcherson, Esq.  
Mary F. Platt, Esq.  
Catherine Raphael  
Sarah E. Ricks, Esq.  
Judith A. Ruszkowski  
Margaret Sadler  
Robin A. Stuntebeck  
Carol E. Tracy, Esq. (ex-officio)  
Thomas E. Zemaitis, Esq.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
Carol E. Tracy, Esq.  
MANAGING ATTORNEY  
Terry L. Fromson, Esq.  
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR  
Dabney Miller  
DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR  
Nan Langen Stekettee  
SENIOR STAFF ATTORNEY  
Susan Frietsche, Esq.\*  
STAFF ATTORNEY  
Amal Bass, Esq.  
BUSINESS/FINANCE MANAGER  
Jane Whittaker  
PROGRAM MANAGER  
WomenVote PA  
Barbara Burgos DiTullio  
PROGRAM ASSOCIATE  
Christina Cann\*  
ACCOUNTANT  
Grace Knight  
OFFICE ADMINISTRATION  
Kathy Eisenberg

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE August 4, 2010

### Women's Advocates Applaud Appeals Court Ruling Vindicating Rape Survivor

In a precedent-setting decision, Judge Kent A. Jordan of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit denounced myths about rape while reinstating the civil rights lawsuit of a Butler County sexual assault victim. *Reedy v. Evan-son* is a case against the Cranberry Township safety director and police officers who wrongfully arrested and charged Sara Reedy with theft, stolen property, and making false reports to law enforcement authorities after she reported the sexual assault and theft of money from her place of employment. She sat in jail for five days and awaited a criminal trial for eight months until a serial rapist confessed to sexually assaulting her and other victims.

The District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania dismissed Ms. Reedy's civil lawsuit after finding the Township police officers had probable cause to arrest her. In rejecting the rape myths on which the police and the District Court relied, the Third Circuit adopted arguments submitted by the Women's Law Project in its *amicus* brief in support of plaintiff Reedy on behalf of 39 non-profit organizations dedicated to improving the criminal justice system's response to violence against women.

Amal Bass, staff attorney for the Women's Law Project, describing the arguments in the brief, said, "the police officers' botched investigation and the District Court's conclusions throwing out Ms. Reedy's civil rights case were based on long-discredited myths about sexual assault that distort the criminal justice system's response to sex crimes against women and girls and undermine decades of legal reform in Pennsylvania." The Third Circuit agreed, noting that "no reasonably competent officer could have concluded at the time of Reedy's arrest that there was probable cause for the arrest." It further stated that it was wrong for the police department and the District Court to find that Ms. Reedy's decisions not to activate an alarm while a gun was pointed at her head and not to pursue counseling after the assault were inculpatory, and that sexual assault victims have "no duty" to pursue counseling or to physically resist their assailants.

Carol Tracy, Executive Director of the Women's Law Project added, "Not only was the police conduct toward the victim egregious, but the public safety was jeopardized because aggressive pursuit of a serial rapist was delayed."

A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free 1.800.732.0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

#### MAIN OFFICE

Sheridan Building  
125 South 9th Street, Suite 300  
Philadelphia, PA 19107

215.928.9801 t • 215.928.9848 f  
www.womenslawproject.org  
info@womenslawproject.org

#### \* WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA OFFICE

The Arrott Building  
401 Wood Street, Suite 1020  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

412.281.2892 t • 412.281.3054 f  
www.womenslawproject.org  
infopitt@womenslawproject.org

The Third Circuit reversed and remanded the case for trial on the merits of Ms. Reedy's Fourth Amendment unlawful seizure, false imprisonment and malicious prosecution claims, and for consideration of whether Detective Evanson is entitled to qualified immunity from Ms. Reedy's Fourth Amendment unlawful search claim.

Susan Frietsche, senior staff attorney in the Women's Law Project's Western Pennsylvania office said "The Third Circuit's opinion is a step towards ridding the criminal justice system of harmful gender-biased myths that prevent victims of sexual assault from obtaining civil and criminal justice."

Plaintiff Sara Reedy is represented by David V. Weicht of Leech, Tishman, Fuscaldo & Lampl in Pittsburgh, Pa.

*About the Women's Law Project:*

*The Women's Law Project, with offices in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, Pa., creates a more just and equitable society by advancing the rights and status of all women throughout their lives. To this end, we engage in high-impact litigation, advocacy, and education.*

###

---

MAIN OFFICE

Sheridan Building  
125 South 9th Street, Suite 300  
Philadelphia, PA 19107

215.928.9801 t • 215.928.9848 f  
[www.womenslawproject.org](http://www.womenslawproject.org)  
[info@womenslawproject.org](mailto:info@womenslawproject.org)

---

\* WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA OFFICE

The Arrott Building  
401 Wood Street, Suite 1020  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

412.281.2892 t • 412.281.3054 f  
[www.womenslawproject.org](http://www.womenslawproject.org)  
[infopitt@womenslawproject.org](mailto:infopitt@womenslawproject.org)