



Michael R. Bracamontes



Ryan J. Vlasak

## Panel Attorney Spotlight

It is an unfortunate fact that people living with HIV/AIDS in the San Francisco Bay Area still face harassment and discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodations. Yet many of these injustices go unchallenged due to the time, energy, and stress of asserting one's rights while struggling with the day-to-day challenges of managing a chronic medical condition. Michael Bracamontes and Ryan Vlasak of Bracamontes & Vlasak P.C. have dedicated their new law practice to providing a voice for clients struggling against workplace

*Continued on pg.7*

## Maintaining Mobility

ALRP attorneys secure reasonable accommodation for tenant

Under the advice of his doctor, Blayne Douglas ordered a motorized "Jazzy" wheelchair and eagerly awaited its delivery. Blayne is living with HIV and had suffered some recent setbacks in his health that made it increasingly difficult for him to walk. As he prepared for his Jazzy to arrive, the elevator in his building began to concern him – the two doors of this older model had to be opened simultaneously in order to enter. Blayne realized that it would be impossible for him to access the elevator with his Jazzy – a terrifying prospect, as he was no longer able to manage the necessities of his daily life without a wheelchair. Therefore, he hoped his landlord would allow him to store the wheelchair in the building's garage, from which he could easily access the elevator and then navigate the short walk to his apartment.

After completing the initial intake with Blayne, ALRP Staff Attorney Diana Hughes, who is participating in a community service fellowship through the firm Dewey & LeBoeuf, immediately contacted the landlord's attorney and requested a reasonable accommodation. Under state and federal fair housing laws, landlords are required to change existing policies and procedures when a tenant's disability necessitates such change. In this case, Diana requested that Blayne's landlord make an exception to its general policy prohibiting tenants from storing personal items in the garage. Much to her shock and dismay, the request was denied.



Realizing that the landlord was going to fight the accommodation, Diana set out to find an ALRP Panel Attorney who would be willing to step in. She reached out to long-time Panel Attorney Andrew Westley, who immediately agreed to assist. Andrew arranged for a meeting at the property with all of the parties present. Although the Jazzy had arrived, Blayne was unable to use it without a storage space. "I had to put my life on hold, because I was without the tools I needed to stay active in it," Blayne explains. However, having the Jazzy there did prove to be useful. At the meeting, Blayne was able to demonstrate that it was impossible for him to maneuver the chair into the elevator. According to Diana, "we all watched for several minutes as Blayne tried unsuccessfully to get into the elevator with his wheelchair. Eventually Andrew and I had to assist him by physically lifting the Jazzy into the elevator."

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## ALRP Mission

To help people with HIV/AIDS maintain or improve their health by resolving their legal issues.



# From the Heart

ALRP Executive Director Bill Hirsh

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## Facing the Future Together

There was a heartfelt documentary shown at the Frameline Film Festival this year called "We Were Here" that chronicled the early years of the AIDS epidemic in San Francisco. As is often the case waiting in line at the Festival, I ran into many friends, including many ALRP supporters. During the film a large part of the crowd was openly weeping, and the standing ovation at the end was a rousing collective cheer for the filmmaker and subjects, as well as for all of us in attendance. We were there. We lived through those scary times. We cared for our friends and lovers as we fought for treatments and against discrimination.



Image from the Film "We Were Here: Voices From the AIDS Years in San Francisco"

As the film made clear, the story of AIDS in San Francisco is not over yet. While it is true that not as many people are dying of AIDS, the sad truth is that more people are living with HIV/AIDS than ever before and we still don't have a cure. In fact, we have

new challenges confronting us all the time. For instance, I learned recently through ALRP's involvement in a workgroup on Aging and HIV that by 2012 over half of all people living with HIV will be over 50 years old. On one level this is great news. But how do we ensure that older people living with HIV/AIDS have the necessary legal assistance to navigate increasingly complex systems to secure and maintain income and healthcare benefits?

While the legal needs of our clients have changed greatly over time, and they are changing still, ALRP has remained a constant in the exemplary model of care for people with HIV/AIDS that San Francisco built in those early years and has sustained to this day. And like at the end of a movie, until the need for our services fades into the sunset – we're still here...

### ALRP Staff

Eric Bull  
Office Manager

Maisha S. Cole, Esq.  
Outreach Attorney

Ted Garey, Esq.  
Staff Attorney

Bill Hirsh, Esq.  
Executive Director

Diana Hughes, Esq.  
Staff Attorney

Sara Malan, Esq.  
Housing Attorney

Jim McBride  
Development Director

Ayako Miyashita, Esq.  
Staff Attorney

Ana Montano, Esq.  
Immigration Attorney

Amy Orgain, Esq.  
Insurance Attorney

Jaime Rush, Esq.  
Housing Attorney

Jennifer Schuster  
Volunteer Coordinator

# ALRP's Recent Events

## ACADEMY OF FRIENDS GALA



Volunteers Amy Orgain and Brian Trowbridge serve dinner to the numerous volunteers at Academy of Friends.

Thirty ALRP volunteers helped at the Academy of Friends Oscar Night Gala on March 7. Our volunteers assisted guests and worked behind the scenes. Overall, ALRP's team of generous volunteers donated a remarkable 130 hours!

## ALRP 10th ANNUAL VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION PARTY



Ed Rittenhouse (center) is named Volunteer of the Year by Diana Camacho and Bill Hirsh.

On April 21, ALRP honored its dedicated Panel attorneys and event and office volunteers at Pillsbury Withrop Shaw Pittman LLP for the 10th Annual Volunteer Appreciation Party. Ed Rittenhouse was recognized as ALRP's Volunteer of the Year for his willingness to volunteer at almost every ALRP event - and showing up with cookies doesn't hurt either.

## ALRP ADVOCATES COUNCIL LEADERSHIP BENEFIT



ALRP Executive Director Bill Hirsh with honoree Mary Lou Hely outside Mojito.

On May 19, over 100 donors attended our 2010 *Advocates Council Leadership Benefit* as part of our spring **Solid Ground Individual Donor Campaign**. Long-time ALRP supporter *Mary Lou Hely* was presented with the James C. Hormel Philanthropist Award, and the **Horizons Foundation** received ALRP's Community Partner Award.



Award presenters ALRP Board Co-Chair Mark Delgado and Major Gifts Committee Co-Chair Brandy Christensen.

Special thanks go to *John Miles/Mojito, Advanced Discovery, Guy Kornblum & Associates, REAF/Ken Henderson* and *Noel Rodriguez* for their generous support.

## FAIR HOUSING TRAINING

On April 22, ALRP presented its annual training on **Fair Housing and Reasonable Accommodations for Tenants with Disabilities**, co-sponsored by the San Francisco Mayor's Office on Disability. We trained over 80 community members including housing providers, support services staff, tenants, and tenant advocates. Thank you to all of the facilitators and participants!

## Connections Corner

### PRO BONO CONNECTIONS INITIATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

**Crowell & Moring LLP**  
*Through David Barton, Esq.*  
Recently joined the PBCI and has already assisted with a referral for a difficult asylum case.

**Hanson Bridgett LLP**  
*Through Steven Miller, Esq.*  
Accepted a referral for an asylee seeking U.S. citizenship.

**Morrison & Foerster**  
*Through Sandra Nazzal, Esq.*  
Recently accepted a referral for an asylee seeking lawful permanent residence in the U.S.

*The PBCI is ALRP's effort toward connecting with the special areas of expertise and resources that larger law firms can offer.*

## Volunteers Corner

### VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

We invite all long-standing and new volunteers to come join the fun at these upcoming events:

**FOLSOM STREET FAIR**  
Sunday, September 26

**CASTRO STREET FAIR**  
Sunday, October 3

**ALRP 27th ANNUAL RECEPTION & AUCTION**  
Wednesday, October 20

To volunteer or for questions, please contact Jennifer Schuster, at [jennifer@alrp.org](mailto:jennifer@alrp.org) or (415) 701-1200 ext. 303.

## Shop for ALRP

### SHOP ONLINE THIS FALL/HOLIDAY



Shop at over 700 brand name stores, including:

Nordstrom • Target • Gap  
Eddie Bauer • Borders  
REI • eBay • L.L. Bean  
Macy's • Barnes & Noble  
Amazon.com • Overstock.com  
Shoes.com • Hotels.com  
Office Depot • Home Depot

Sign up or learn more at [www.iGive.com/ALRP](http://www.iGive.com/ALRP).

Shop at your favorite online store and make an automatic donation of up to 27% to ALRP!

### GIVE THAT GIFT THAT GIVES TWICE!

Looking for a great gift to give to your Mom, Dad, or Partner this holiday season?

Purchase *The Bracelet* and benefit both ALRP and the *Until There's A Cure Foundation*.



Visit [www.until.org](http://www.until.org) to order, or to see more bracelet styles. Help ALRP be there for our clients, until there's a cure...



## Be a Part of the ALRP Event of the Year

### BUY A RECEPTION TICKET

JOIN US on Wednesday, OCTOBER 20  
as ALRP commemorates 27 years of service at our  
**ALRP *From the Heart* 27th Annual Reception & Auction**  
6:00-9:00pm in the Green Room of the SF War Memorial  
Building (410 Van Ness in SF).



#### ALRP 2010 Honorees:

Martha J. Simon, Esq. - 2010 Clint Hockenberry Leadership Award  
Michael Bracamontes, Esq. & Ryan Vlasak, Esq. - 2010 Attorneys of the Year  
Lewis, Feinberg, Lee, Renaker & Jackson, P.C. - 2010 Firm of the Year

Guest Host will be Mark Leno, California State Senator.  
The reception includes a Live & Silent Auction and Wine & Catered Hors D'oeuvres.  
Last year we raised over \$118,000, 89% of which went directly to client services.

TICKETS START AT ONLY \$75. Visit [www.alrp.org](http://www.alrp.org) for more information.

### BID ON AN AUCTION ITEM

Visit [www.biddingforgood.com/ALRPauction](http://www.biddingforgood.com/ALRPauction) and let the bidding begin!  
ALRP is holding an online auction as part of our 27th Annual Reception & Auction.  
In addition to the Live and Silent Auction at the Reception on October 20, the **ALRP Online Auction will run from September 1 through October 18**. All high bids at the close of the online auction become opening bids at the Live/Silent Auction.

**Over 60 items will be featured, including adventures, entertainment, wine, restaurant gift certificates, memorabilia, gifts, jewelry, travel, and more...**

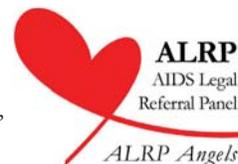
If you can't attend the Reception, ALRP can still bid for you.  
Simply select the Proxy Bidder option and list your maximum bid amount for each item.

Please support the work of ALRP by bidding in our online auction. Thank you.

## Be an Angel

Join the ALRP Angels Legacy Society by naming ALRP in your will or trust.

All we need is an email confirming your intention or a copy of the page in your estate documents that mentions ALRP. For more information, visit [www.alrp.org](http://www.alrp.org) and click on the Donate menu item, then click on Planned Giving: Wills/Bequests in the left menu.



For information on getting help with your will or joining the ALRP Angels Legacy Society, contact: **Jim McBride, ALRP Development Dir.**, at (415) 701-1200 ext. 301 or [jim@alrp.org](mailto:jim@alrp.org).

# Fast & Easy Ways to Support ALRP



## ONLINE DONATIONS



Simply click the blue DONATE NOW button on any page at [www.alrp.org](http://www.alrp.org) to help keep ALRP's legal services available to people with HIV/AIDS this year. Make a one-time or monthly/quarterly recurring donation. It is fasy and easy!

Or mail a gift directly to ALRP, 1663 Mission St., Suite 500, San Francisco, CA 94103.



## MATCHING GIFTS

### Corporate Matching Gifts

Multiply your gift with a match from your company.

Get your firm/company to match your donation and MAKE TWICE THE IMPACT! Just contact your HR or Contributions office, fill out the form, and send it in with your donation. ALRP can assist you. Just call us...



## CAR DONATIONS



With the ALRP Car Donation Program, you can get a tax break, FREE IRS and DMV paperwork, and FREE pick-up (in most cases). To donate your car or truck, simply call our car program partner BIZZARRO'S AUCTIONS at 1 (866) 273-5898 or contact ALRP.



## UNITED WAY GIFTS

United Way  
of the Bay Area

LIVE UNITED

United Way now uses addresses for designations instead of codes. Please designate ALRP by including our address; 1663 Mission Street, Suite 500, San Francisco, CA 94103.

If you are a federal/state employee, designate ALRP through the *Combined Federal Campaign* and the *CA State Employee's Charitable Campaign* - look for ALRP in your campaign directory.



## LEGAL SERVICES DONATION PROGRAM



U.S. LEGAL  
Support, Inc.

Does your firm order *electronic discovery services*, *schedule depositions*, or purchase *subpoena preparation* or *record retrieval services*? Participate in the ALRP Legal Services Donation Program (LSDP) and get great service and special competitive pricing – and ALRP gets a donation. For electronic discovery services, contact **Advanced Discovery** at (415) 608-4375 (SF) or (650) 575-4415 (Palo Alto). For depositions, subpoena prep, or record retrieval services, contact **U.S. Legal Support** at (415) 215-1134.

## More Shopping...

### FIND GREAT GIFTS UNDER ONE ROOF



Shop at UNDER ONE ROOF at 518A Castro between 18th & 19th Streets. Store is open daily from 10:00am-9:00pm.

Or visit [www.underonerroof.org](http://www.underonerroof.org). Help raise funds for AIDS agencies, including ALRP.

*Shop for a cause!*

## Clean Giving

### DONATE YOUR OLD HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

Do your fall cleaning and help ALRP.

Recycle your clothing and household items at COMMUNITY THRIFT.



Simply drop off your items at 623 Valencia Street at 17th and list ALRP Code 230.

Donate any day from 10:00am-5:00pm.

Visit this site for a listing of acceptable items: [www.communitythrifsf.org](http://www.communitythrifsf.org)

**ALRP WELCOMES  
NEW STAFF  
MEMBERS**

**Ayako Miyashita, Esq.**  
*Staff Attorney - HIV Consumer  
Advocacy Project*

Ayako received her B.A. in Community Studies from U.C. Santa Cruz and received her J.D. from U.C. Berkeley School of Law in 2009. While at Boalt Hall, Ayako was involved with the *Asian American Law Journal*, one of only two journals in the country that is dedicated to Asian American jurisprudence. She also spent a year volunteering as a law clerk for the East Bay Community Law Center, serving HIV-positive clients with immigration matters. When Ayako is not busy with work, she is busy keeping up with family, friends, and good eats in the Bay Area.



**Jennifer Schuster**  
*Volunteer Coordinator*



Jennifer attended Dartmouth College where she studied Government and Women's and Gender Studies. Jennifer served as Vice President of the College Democrats and President of Gender Sexuality XYZ, the student organization serving LGBTQA-identified students. Prior to joining ALRP, Jennifer worked as a Development Associate at Out & Equal Workplace Advocates. She has also interned at The Beck Law Group, P.C. and Project Inform. In her free time, Jennifer enjoys running, reading *The New York Times*, and playing Scrabble.

# Medical Records Q&A

By Jared Cail, ALRP Law Clerk

Dear ALRP,

**I often wonder about the contents of my file at my doctor's office where I receive care for HIV. Since the records in my file are about me, can I just ask for the file and take it whenever I choose? What about if I want to change doctors?**

**Thanks,  
Curious**

Dear Curious,

Medical records do not belong to the patient, but are the property of the medical provider or facility that prepares them. However, there is a law that establishes your right as a patient to see and receive copies of your medical records. Section 123110 of the California Health and Safety Code requires physicians to allow you to view your medical records within five working days of a written request. The physician must allow you to bring a person of your choosing with you, and you may also designate a representative to view and receive copies of your records. The physician or medical staff may also require you to verify your identity by showing an ID.

If you need physical copies of your records, you should request copies in writing. Most medical facilities will provide you with a records request form that you can complete and return to the facility. The medical facility must provide you with copies of your records within 15 days of your request, and may charge a fee to pay for the cost of copying. This fee cannot exceed 25 cents per page for normal pages or 50 cents per page for records that are copied from microfilm.

If you are thinking about changing physicians, please be aware that the transfer of your medical records to a new physician is considered a professional courtesy and is not required under this law. Most physicians will be willing to send your records to

a new medical facility, but there are no time limits on transferring the records. If you want to be sure your new doctor received your medical records, you can request in writing that the records be given to you. Then you can provide a copy of these records to whomever you choose.

Dear ALRP,

**I have been diagnosed with HIV and I think my doctor has made mistakes in the care she is giving me. Is there anything I can do?**

**- Sick in SF**

Dear Sick,

There are a few options you can consider. First, schedule a conversation with your physician to discuss your concerns. If you have access to a medical social worker, contact the social worker and ask him/her to be present during the conversation. If you don't feel that your physician is taking your concerns seriously or if you feel that more should be done to remedy the situation, you can file an internal grievance at the medical facility. All hospitals and doctors' offices should have a patient relations department, or at least a grievance procedure in place for resolving patients' concerns about their medical care.

If the grievance does not address your concerns and you are interested in pursuing a civil claim against the doctor or the medical facility, you should seek a consultation with an attorney who specializes in medical malpractice claims. Contact ALRP for a referral to a malpractice attorney who can provide you with a free consultation. During this consultation, the attorney will evaluate your claim and discuss the pros and cons of taking legal action.

If you are not interested in pursuing a civil

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## Panel Attorney Spotlight: Bracamontes & Vlasak

*Continued from pg. 1*

discrimination, wrongful evictions, and unfair housing conditions.

Michael and Ryan joined ALRP's referral Panel in November of 2008, shortly after opening their firm. They have consistently shown a strong commitment to assisting ALRP clients in the areas of landlord/tenant, employment, personal injury, and civil rights, and deserve special recognition for providing consultations to over 55 ALRP clients in the short time they have been on the Panel. They are highly regarded by ALRP staff for their reliability and willingness to provide free legal consultations to ALRP clients, regardless of whether the client has a case that will ultimately lead to direct representation. They welcome the opportunity to talk to clients and to empower them to make informed decisions about their legal issues.

One such client, D.B., contacted ALRP because he was experiencing workplace harassment. He was referred to Bracamontes & Vlasak for a consultation.

"I had a harassment problem at work and consulted attorney Ryan Vlasak. He promptly filed a complaint on my behalf. Throughout the process, Ryan was detailed and aggressive in negotiating with my employer. He knew when to push on and when to talk settlement. As a result, I ended up with a larger settlement than I had expected. I highly recommend Ryan Vlasak and Bracamontes & Vlasak law firm. All of the attorneys there are sharp, professional, and a pleasure to work with."

Michael received his law degree from the University of California at Berkeley School of Law. During law school he was involved with the Workers' Rights Clinic where he developed his interest in representing victims of civil injustice. Ryan received his law degree from the Temple University James E. Beasley School of Law in Philadelphia and moved to the San Francisco Bay Area in 2005, where he worked with Michael at a civil litigation firm. The two decided to start their own

practice in October of 2008. According to Michael, it was an unsettling idea to start a new firm right in the middle of a recession, but they both felt strongly that they wanted to focus exclusively on plaintiff-side litigation and knew it was the right time to make the move. Since they opened their doors they have had no shortage of clients. Their next challenge will be to expand their firm and manage that growth responsibly.

ALRP is truly grateful for Michael and Ryan's dedication to public service, their diligent work on behalf of ALRP clients, and their passion for defending victims of civil injustice.



## Medical Records Q&A

*Continued from previous page*

claim, but still believe your physician acted unprofessionally, you can file a complaint with the Medical Board of California. The board will investigate your complaint and, if warranted, will take administrative action against the physician's license to practice medicine.

ALRP strongly recommends that you fully pursue all non-legal options before considering legal action or filing an official complaint with the Medical Board of California. For assistance in navigating your way through the grievance process, please contact ALRP at (415) 701-1100.

## Maintaining Mobility

*Continued from pg. 1*



*ALRP Panel Attorney  
Andrew Westley*

Despite this compelling demonstration, the landlord continued to refuse to grant the accommodation. Andrew prepared a final demand letter in an attempt to avoid litigation.

After several weeks, Andrew received a response indicating that Blayne would be permitted to store his chair in the garage. However, the landlord denied Blayne use of the locker he had constructed. Again, Andrew geared up for litigation, but the landlord finally relented and agreed to pay for the construction of a new, freestand-

ing private storage locker.

Blayne now has his mobility back and is thrilled to be able to continue to live independently in spite of his disability. He explains, "Now I'm able to resume my life...I can manage my doctor appointments by actually showing up. With my chair, I can do everything I could before, only quicker. I'm back in business. I'm ecstatic." He is eternally grateful to ALRP and its dedicated Panel and Staff Attorneys like Andrew Westley and Diana Hughes.



*ALRP Staff Attorney  
Diana Hughes*



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**Panel Notes**

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**Editors**

Diana Camacho &  
Jennifer Schuster

## Upcoming ALRP Events



**FOLSOM STREET FAIR**

Sunday, SEPTEMBER 26

Folsom Street, SF  
Get your leather on and  
volunteer with ALRP.



**ALRP *From the Heart* 27th  
ANNUAL RECEPTION & AUCTION**

Wednesday, OCTOBER 20

Bid on great auction items and  
help us commemorate ALRP's 27th!



**CASTRO STREET FAIR**

Sunday, OCTOBER 3

Castro Neighborhood, SF  
Come help us collect donations  
at the Fair gates.



**ACADEMY OF FRIENDS  
OSCAR NIGHT GALA**

Sunday, FEBRUARY 27, 2011

Fort Mason, SF  
ALRP is a beneficiary of AOF Gala 2011 –  
stay tuned for more info!