

in brief

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Karen Kaplowitz **Aims High**



Now Legal Defense relies on the support of its donors – both those who contribute financially and those who, like Karen Kaplowitz, give their skills and time.

Karen first became involved with NOW Legal Defense in California, through a Los Angeles friend and colleague who served on the board. After moving back East in 1988, Karen met with President Kathy Rodgers to discuss how she might be helpful to the organization.

“I asked if NOW Legal Defense would find it valuable to build a network of powerful women in the business community,” Karen recalled, “and proposed that we honor 30 powerful women in celebration of the then upcoming 30th anniversary of NOW Legal Defense. They agreed and we were off to the races.”

The event became an annual one, and Karen has served as a co-chair every year. In addition to recognizing the achievements of outstanding women, Aiming High is a crucial fundraiser that brought in over \$650,000 this year. It also serves to strengthen the relationship between NOW Legal Defense and corporate America, a task for which Karen is particularly suited. “Karen is a master network builder,” said President Kathy Rogers, “and that has proved invaluable to the work of NOW Legal Defense.” A former business trial lawyer and Marketing Partner for the LA firm Alschuler Grossman Stein & Kahan, Karen started her own consulting business, the New Ellis Group, in 1997 to assist clients with business development. She helps businesses in both the private and non-profit sector to build networks of clients, referral services, and supporters. “Building networks for my clients is the core of my work,” she said.

Karen’s interest in women’s rights began in 1968 at the University of Chicago Law School, where she and her 29 female classmates learned to fight back when their opportunities for advancement were threatened.

In her second year at law school, Karen helped organize female classmates to challenge the school’s refusal to bar blatantly discriminatory law firms from recruiting on campus. The action resulted in a lawsuit in which Karen agreed to be the named plaintiff. The case, *Kaplowitz v. The University of Chicago*, was the first to broadly define the scope of the employment agency section of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, asserting that the school as an employment agency was obliged to bar discriminatory law firms.

Owning her own business with husband and partner Alan Cohen has provided Karen with a great deal of flexibility. In addition to her work with NOW Legal Defense she serves on the Advisory Board of Disability Rights Advocates, based in Oakland, CA. She lives in New Hope, Pennsylvania and is the mother of two teenagers.