School Ties

ALDF and Yale team up for a groundbreaking conference

Holding a conference on legal issues at the respected Yale Law School in New Haven, Conn., is like playing a concert in Carnegie Hall. It says you’ve made it.

So congratulations are in order for the animal law field. Thanks to a recent ALDF conference, it has arrived.

This November, attorneys, law students and law professors from across the country came together at Yale Law School for The Future of Animal Law, a conference exploring how U.S. law is evolving to reflect Americans’ changing attitudes about animals. Sponsored by ALDF and Yale’s Student Animal Legal Defense Fund (SALDF) chapter, the conference drew 230 participants for two days of intensive discussion focusing on important animal law issues.

“I think the size of the conference surprised a lot of people – even I was surprised,” says law student Jennifer Sperling, president of Yale’s SALDF chapter and (along with fellow SALDF member Bonita Meyersfeld) a key organizer for the event. “It was fantastic to realize there are so many practitioners and academics engaging with these issues nationwide.”

One person who wasn’t surprised by the widespread interest in the conference was ALDF Executive Director Joyce Tischler.

“We’ve seen rapid growth in the number of animal law courses and SALDF chapters across the nation, so we know that animal law is gaining ground fast,” she says. “We’re tremendously pleased that a prestigious institution like Yale Law School would recognize that. Validation like that will push animal law forward even faster.”

“Animal law” can be defined as the body of statutory and case law related to non-human animals. It’s a fast-expanding field, as is demonstrated by the variety of topics covered in the conference’s keynote addresses and panel discussions: animals and trust law, judicial recognition of animals’ inherent interests, non-economic damages (i.e., pain and suffering) in lawsuits related to killed or injured companion animals and more.

According to Yale Law School Professor Harold Koh, who became the law school’s dean earlier this year, that wide array of dynamic issues

Continued on page 4
Justice for Animals Is Comin’ to Town

The holidays are traditionally a time when we look back to the past. We watch old movies (It’s a Wonderful Life, White Christmas), sing old songs (“Jingle Bells,” “Auld Lang Syne”), think of old friends and remember happy times with loved ones we’ve lost.

But right now I’m not dwelling on the past. I’m thinking about the future. And it makes me feel a little bit like a kid on Christmas Eve. There’s something good – even magical – on the way. And it’s a lot better than a bunch of new toys. It’s justice.

How can I be so sure? Well, remember in “A Christmas Carol” when Ebenezer Scrooge is visited by the scariest apparition of them all, the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come? I’m no Scrooge, but I did get a similar visit a few weeks before the holiday season began. It was early November, and I was in New Haven, Conn., for ALDF’s animal law conference at Yale Law School. (See page 1.) While I was there, I was visited by the Ghost of Animal Law Yet to Come. And he wasn’t scary at all. Quite the opposite – the things he showed me were tremendously exciting.

I saw new legal strategies for helping animals being developed and implemented. I saw important precedents established acknowledging animals’ inherent individual interests. I saw a growing acceptance of animal law in America’s law schools and courts. And I saw a whole new generation of animal advocates coming together to share ideas and inspiration – then moving on to do something with them.

At the end of “A Christmas Carol,” Scrooge is a changed man. After taking a look at his own future – in which he dies unmourned, having never touched another life in a positive way – he opens his heart to those around him. He vows to make a difference in the world, and through that he finds happiness at last.

Of course, those of us who are fighting to protect animals from cruelty aren’t in need of a Scrooge-like transformation at all. We’re already making a difference. And we’re going to be making even more of a difference in the years ahead as the influence of animal law continues to spread.

I hope reading about ALDF’s conference at Yale Law School gives you a glimpse of the future I’ve seen. It’s a future we can all look forward to – a future when “peace on earth, goodwill toward men” includes true goodwill toward animals.

Sincerely,

Steve Ann Chambers
New Program Takes Action Against Abuse

Every day, ALDF attorneys work to keep animal abusers off the streets and away from new victims. And now ALDF’s going to get the general public into the act. Through a newly launched program called ACT – the Anti-Cruelty Team – concerned citizens across the country will be able to join our fight against animal abuse.

An outgrowth of the Actionline Bulletin updates in The Animals’ Advocate and on the ALDF website, ACT will keep animal guardians informed when new cruelty cases arise. After joining the team via the website, ACT members will receive e-mailed action alerts with contact information for prosecutors and judges handling cruelty cases. The ACT e-mailing list will also be used to gather activists on a regional level, since a large turnout for a court date or sentencing hearing can reinforce that the community is watching and won’t tolerate animal abuse – or lenient treatment of abusers.

“We know ALDF members feel very, very strongly about stamping out cruelty to animals, so we thought they’d like the chance to get involved themselves,” says Anti-Cruelty Division Director Pamela Frasch. “Through this new program, they can help us apply that extra pressure that can make a big difference in an animal abuse case.”

If you’re ready to get involved, go to www.aldf.org and click the ACT link.

Congress Sells Out Wild Horses, Burros

In a move even the ultra-conservative Washington Times blasted as a “bit of bad pork,” Montana Senator Conrad Burns slipped language into a huge spending measure (Appropriations Bill HR 4818) that stripped wild horses of their last remaining protections under the law. The new provision legalized the rounding-up and selling of wild horses and burros “without limitation.” In other words, Burns gave Western ranchers what they’ve been hoping to get for years: The go-ahead to utterly destroy wild herds and grab publicly owned grazing land for their own cattle. In the meantime, more wild horses will be taken off the range and sent to slaughterhouses – and, from there, to the restaurants and butcher shops of Europe and Asia.

But though President Bush signed the bill into law in November, the battle’s not over yet. Here are three things you can do to help:

➤ Contact your Congressional representatives (by going to www.webslingerz.com/jhoffman/congress-email.html on the Web) and demand that they support the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act (HR 857 and S 2352), a bill that would stop the killing of horses in the U.S. for human consumption abroad.

➤ Write to Senator Burns (at http://burns.senate.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=Home.Contact) and the Montana Promotion Division (at P.O. Box 200533, Helena, MT 59620-0533) and let them know you won’t be spending your tourist dollars in their state.

➤ Adopt wild horses and burros through a program of the Bureau of Land Management (https://www.adoptahorse.blm.gov/).

“Congress once passed legislation describing wild horses and burros as ‘living symbols of the historic and pioneer spirit of the West,’” says ALDF Executive Director Joyce Tischler. “It’s heart-breaking to see the federal government toss those symbols aside so callously. Now it’s up to us to ensure that free-roaming horses and burros have a place on the open range.”

Veterinarian Charged With Animal Neglect

A veterinarian in Washington County, Ore., has been charged with six counts of animal neglect following forfeiture of six horses who are so severely malnourished that it is nearly impossible to guess their ages.

Susan Matlock, DVM, is accused of locking the former show horses inside a dark, unventilated barn and forcing them to eat their own waste and wood from the stalls to survive. Rescue workers report that the horses had many parasites and skin infections, and their eyes had gone flat from dehydration. One horse, named Pete, could hardly walk when rescued and needed $6,000 surgery due to an untreated abscessed wound which led to an extremely painful condition called septic arthritis.

Matlock has been suspended from her work at Banfield Pet Hospital in Hillsboro, Ore. On October 18, she plead innocent to the charges, and her trial has been scheduled for February 16, 2005.

To urge the prosecutor to ask for an order prohibiting Matlock (if convicted) from owning or harboring horses again, sentencing her to mandatory psychiatric treatment and requiring her to pay restitution for all medical costs, write a polite letter to:

Sarah Allen
Washington County DA’s Office
150 N. First Avenue, Ste. 300
Hillsboro, OR 97124-3072
Fax: 503-846-3407
School Ties

continued from front page

Winter 2004

— and the amount of serious attention they've been given both in academia and the court system — is what made an animal law conference so appealing to him and his colleagues.

“Animal law is a vibrant emerging field,” says Koh, who delivered the conference’s closing remarks. “Yale Law School [was] pleased to host this conference along with the Animal Legal Defense Fund. As increasing attention is focused on the growing body of laws surrounding animal rights, practitioners and scholars [welcomed] this opportunity to discuss cutting-edge legal issues with the foremost experts in this field.”

Among the many leading animal law and animal protection experts who took part in the conference were Tischler; ALDF President Steve Ann Chambers; Steven M. Wise, author of Rattling the Cage and Drawing the Line; Wayne Pacelle, president and CEO of the Humane Society of the United States; Paul Leonard, director of the Center for Animal Law & Advocacy and former lieutenant governor of Ohio; David Wolfson, adjunct professor of law at Harvard Law School; David Favre, professor of law at Michigan State University College of Law; and Josh Marquis, district attorney of Clatsop County, Ore. ALDF staff members — including Anti-Cruelty Division Director Pamela Frasch, Director of Legislative Affairs Stephan Otto and Staff Attorney Dana Campbell — presented papers exploring the impact of felony animal cruelty laws, providing comprehensive guidance to prosecutors handling animal abuse cases and offering a broad overview of state animal laws across the country. Animal Law Program Director Steve Wells also led an interactive session on opportunities for attorneys and law students in the field of animal law.

“This was the most informative and best-orga-

SALDF Tops 50 Chapters

Yale isn’t the only law school where students are taking a big interest in animal law. The Student Animal Legal Defense Fund (SALDF), the ALDF offshoot for law students who want to learn more about the newly emerging legal specialty, added 18 new chapters this year. That brings the total number of SALDF chapters up to 57, an all-time high.

Law students at the University of Baltimore, the University of Miami, Canada’s McGill University and other schools have formed new SALDF chapters. Now — like SALDF members at Georgetown Law School, Stanford Law School, Northwestern Law School and other prestigious institutions — they’ll gather regularly to discuss animal law and organize events that draw attention to animal issues. This fall, for instance, SALDF members at Yale Law School helped organize the Future of Animal Law conference. And this past spring, SALDF members at Harvard Law School teamed up with the National Center for Animal Law to host the first annual National Animal Advocacy Competitions.

“We’ve never seen so much SALDF activity before, and all indications are it’s going to get even busier still,” says Steve Wells, director of ALDF’s Animal Law Program. “We’ve never seen such a motivated, energetic group of students.”

One of those energetic students is Jennifer Sperling. Currently in her third year at Yale Law School, Sperling plans to devote her career to animal law upon graduation. Though she acknowledges that SALDF isn’t as ubiquitous as certain other campus organizations, she thinks that could change in the years ahead.

“Maybe we don’t have as much strength in numbers as some groups yet,” she says, “but the passion of our members for the issues keeps us moving forward.”

SALDF was founded in 1993. From one chapter (on the campus of the Northwestern School of Law of Lewis and Clark College in Oregon), the program quickly spread across the country. Today it can be found in 29 states and two Canadian provinces.

“We envisioned SALDF as a way to reach out to law students who are sympathetic to animal protection issues but might not be aware of animal law,” says ALDF Executive Director Joyce Tischler. “It’s been a true joy for us to see how many students have embraced the program. These are the animal advocates of the future. Hopefully, through SALDF, we’re giving them some of the tools they’ll need to build a better world for animals through the law.”
SALDF member Bonita Meyersfeld (left) with ALDF staffers Steve Wells and Liberty Mulkani

“Animal advocates aren’t on the fringe. We’re on the cutting edge.”

nized conference I’ve attended,” says attorney Jennifer Dietz, a founding member of the Florida Bar Association’s Animal Law Committee. “The panels, the speeches – it was all without comparison. I definitely feel like I learned how to practice animal law better.”

For attorney Bruce Wagman, who teaches courses in animal law at Hastings College of Law, UC Berkeley – Boalt Hall and USF Law School, one speech in particular had special meaning. “I was excited to hear Dean Koh discuss animal law and endorse it as an important new area of the law deserving of further exploration, education and exposure,” says Wagman, who became ALDF’s new litigation counsel a few weeks after the conference. (See page 8.) “That was the highlight of the conference for me.”

Attorney Patti Bednarik, on the other hand, picked a different set of highlights from her conference experience: the many opportunities she had to meet, greet and pick the brains of like-minded animal advocates. “The networking opportunities were wonderful,” says Bednarik, who started the Pennsylvania Bar Association’s Animal Law Committee. “It was really helpful to learn what other attorneys are doing in other states to promote favorable animal legislation and case law.”

According to ALDF Animal Law Program Director Steve Wells, providing those kinds of networking opportunities was one of the prime motivations behind the conference. “Journals, newsletters and e-mail lists are all fine ways to disseminate ideas, but nothing can compare with face-to-face meetings,” he says. “There’s a special magic that can be sparked when you bring people together – you have people not just sharing information, but forming friendships and strategic partnerships. I think we’ll be seeing dividends [of that] from this conference for a long, long time.”

What we’ll also see for a long, long time is the continued growth of animal law. As The Future of Animal Law demonstrated, the field has a bright future indeed. “The turnout for the conference, the enthusiasm of everyone involved, Yale Law School’s support – I think it all sends a message,” says Tischler. “Animal advocates aren’t on the fringe. We’re on the cutting edge. The rest of the legal world is catching up, and that’s a wonderful thing to see.”

Michigan State University law students Leslie Sauerbrey (left) and Sarah Lynn Babcock
Class Acts

SALDF alums turn their knowledge into action

It’s all well and good that the Student Animal Legal Defense Fund is growing by leaps and bounds. (See “SALDF Tops 50 Chapters,” page 4.) But that’s academia. What about the real world?

Well, SALDF is having an impact there, too. Because the students who’ve built SALDF into a nationwide network don’t leave their ideals behind when they graduate from law school. They carry those ideals with them – along with a law degree to back them up.

The result? Lawyers like Amy Breyer, Melissa Bonfiglio, Chris Wencker and Laura Ireland Moore – attorneys who are carrying animal law into the mainstream of the American legal system.

**AMY BREYER**

Amy Breyer had been enjoying a successful career as a television news writer and producer when she came across a story that would drastically change her career. She was reading a wire story about a man who had been convicted of animal cruelty and she suddenly realized that she wanted to be the one convicting this man for his crime, not merely the person telling the story. Thus began Amy Breyer’s career in animal law.

While attending Northwestern University School of Law in Chicago, Breyer started an SALDF chapter that hosted events such as speakers’ series, fundraisers for the Anti-Cruelty Society and petition signing for animal causes. The SALDF chapter was very well received by the law school administration and continues to flourish. Today Breyer focuses her legal career on animal law. (To learn more about Breyer and her Chicago-based practice, visit her online at www.animallawonline.net.) The advice she offers law students with an interest in animal law is clearly advice she’s taken to heart herself.

“Do what you love,” she says.

**MELISSA BONFIGLIO**

Melissa Bonfiglio had a lot of choices when it came to the law school she would attend. But she chose UCLA Law School for one very important reason: She knew she’d find like-minded people there – people who took animal issues very seriously.

Bonfiglio knew that for two reasons: She’d already met (and felt deeply inspired by) UCLA animal law professor Taimie Bryant, and a group of UCLA students had been hosting an animal law lecture series. There was only one thing missing – an SALDF chapter. So Bonfiglio started one.

Bonfiglio felt that a new SALDF chapter would help spread awareness (and acceptance) of animal law. The law school administration was very supportive of the idea, and pretty soon there was enough student interest to organize several substantial projects. The UCLA SALDF group sponsored the Bohnett Animal Law Lecture Series, published a vegetarian/vegan dining guide, held a seminar on legislative research and conducted annual legislative analysis projects. Though all these activities catered to students with an interest in helping animals, Bonfiglio strove to welcome people with a variety of views to their presentations and seminars in an effort to educate a broader audience about animal protection issues.

Bonfiglio now works for a large firm in Irvine, Calif. Although her legal practice doesn’t focus on animal law, she is drawing on her SALDF experience: She recently began working with an attorney from the firm’s Washington, D.C., office on a pro bono animal law project.
CHRI$ WENCKER

When Chris Wencker started his legal studies at the University of Arizona, he was unaware that the field of animal law even existed. He’d been studying environmental law and questioning why the curriculum didn’t focus more on wildlife when his girlfriend (now fiancée) suggested that he find a way to “do something for the animals.” After some research on the Web, Wencker contacted ALDF about bringing SALDF to U of A.

According to Wencker, some of his fellow law students weren’t sure what to make of the SALDF group at first. One student even asked, “Are you trying to get my dog the right to vote?” Despite such responses, the SALDF chapter was able to establish a strong and dedicated group of students who worked on a variety of projects. The chapter started a holiday companion animal-sitting program, hosted an animal law discussion with ALDF board member Stephanie Nichols-Young and raised enough money to send two students to the 9th Annual Animal Law Conference in Portland, Ore.

From his participation with SALDF, Wencker says he gained the “motivation to make animal law part of (his) practice.” He now works for a firm which handles a variety of cases, some of which are animal related. He also sits on the board of directors for a local animal welfare umbrella organization and is involved with the Arizona Bar Animal Law Section.

Wencker’s advice for current SALDF members can be boiled down to one word: learn.

“Learn as much as you can about how the various fields of law conceptualize and deal with animals,” he says. “Learn about animal laws at local, state, national and international levels.”

LAURA IRELAND MOORE

Laura Ireland Moore has been an activist since junior high, when a camp counselor inspired her to get involved with animal issues. Choosing a path she hoped would lead her to “influence more effective changes for animals,” Moore enrolled at Lewis and Clark College of Law, the birthplace of the first SALDF chapter as well as the acclaimed journal Animal Law.

Moore’s experience with SALDF included helping to organize projects such as the annual Animal Law Conference and speakers’ series, volunteering with local animal shelters and providing research for local animal law attorneys. For Moore, the SALDF chapter provided an opportunity to meet people with similar interests and work on animal law projects while also providing a constant “reminder of why it was so important to survive classes such as Civil Procedure and Contracts.”

Since passing the bar in 2001, Moore has been enjoying her two dream jobs: one as executive director of the National Center for Animal Law and the other as an animal law attorney with Geordie Duckler, LLC.

“Follow your heart,” Moore advises today’s law students. “As long as you stay true to your beliefs, are willing to make a few sacrifices and be a little creative, you can find a way to incorporate animal law into your life. The animals need you to make your dream of working in animal law come true.”

These attorneys are carrying animal law into the mainstream of the American legal system.

To see a full list of law schools with SALDF chapters (as well as animal law courses), go to www.aldf.org/students.asp?sect=resources on the World Wide Web.

If you’re a law student with an interest in starting a new SALDF chapter at your school, ALDF’s Liberty Mulkani can help you. She can be contacted at lmulkani@aldf.org.
Wagman to Spearhead ALDF Litigation

ALDF has beefed up its litigation muscle by naming longtime animal advocate (and ALDF ally) Bruce Wagman the organization’s new director of litigation. Wagman will use his extensive legal expertise to strengthen ALDF’s efforts to help animals through the court system.

As part of his new position, Wagman will identify and research cases, write briefs, collaborate with outside counsel, file suits and argue for increased animal protections in court. A partner at Morgenstein & Jubelirer in San Francisco, he will continue his work with the firm while handling litigation on behalf of ALDF.

“We couldn’t have found a better lawyer for the job,” says ALDF Executive Director Joyce Tischler. “Bruce has been a huge help to us on case after case, so it only made sense to officially bring him in-house sooner or later. We’re tremendously excited to have him on board in this position.”

Since 1994, Wagman has been an adjunct professor at Hastings College of the Law, where he teaches courses in Animal Law and insurance law. Wagman also teaches Animal Law courses at UC Berkeley — Boalt Hall and USF Law School. He is the co-author of *Animal Law*, the first casebook published for Animal Law courses in law schools. His work has also been published in the *Hastings Law Journal* and in the *University of San Francisco Law Journal*. He is a 1991 magna cum laude graduate of Hastings College of the Law, where he received American Jurisprudence Awards in torts, property, contracts, civil procedure and federal courts and was an articles editor on the *Hastings Law Journal*. He served as judicial clerk to the Honorable William H. Orrick of the United States District Court for the Northern District of California from 1991 to 1992 and as an extern to the Honorable James Browning of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in 1990.

“This is my dream job — fighting to change the way the world looks at and treats animals with people who share my vision,” Wagman says. “It doesn’t get any better than this.”