

## Know Your Rights!

*MHAS Fair Housing program launches new project.*

One of the greatest challenges faced by people with mental disabilities is housing discrimination. Fair Housing laws provide many protections to people with disabilities, but all too often mental health consumers are unaware of their rights.

With a new grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Fair Housing Initiatives Program (FHIP), Mental Health Advocacy Services will be reaching out to mental health consumers to provide them with the tools they need to be their own advocates.

MHAS Staff Attorney Carey Stone will spearhead the project, which will include a "Fair Housing Tip of the Month" campaign that will start distribution this fall. Over the next 18 months, Stone will also conduct trainings for hundreds of mental health consumers. Both the Tips and the trainings will be available in English and Spanish.

MHAS will also continue to assist individual clients with fair housing issues. Stone says a typical client was a gentleman who was living in supportive transitional housing and was having trouble with his medication. The medication was causing him to have erratic, troubling behavior,

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## Annual Celebration

Save the date! MHAS' Third Annual Celebration will be held Thursday, September 17, 2009, at the offices of Mungler, Tolles & Olson LLP.

Join us in honoring Terri Cheney, author of the bestselling memoir *Manic*, and James Allen, Deputy Director, L.A. County Department of Mental Health, retired. For information about sponsorships or ticket purchases, contact Nicole Roberts at 213-389-2077, ext. 25, or [nroberts@mhas-la.org](mailto:nroberts@mhas-la.org), or visit [www.mhas-la.org](http://www.mhas-la.org).



## Who is Emily Q?

*MHAS continues working to improve treatment for children.*

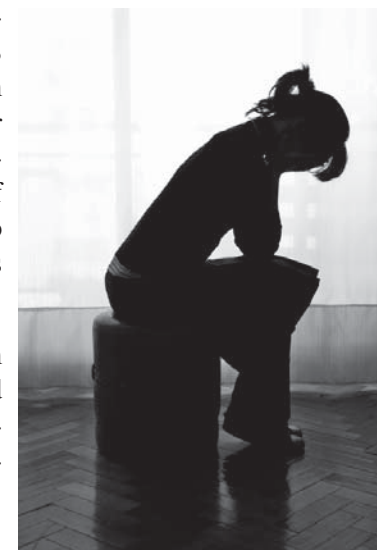
In the ten years since the landmark *Emily Q.* case was filed, advocates have worked continuously to bring Therapeutic Behavior Services (TBS) to unprecedented numbers of children in California who suffer from severe emotional and behavioral problems. MHAS Executive Director Jim Preis is a key member of the *Emily Q.* Settlement Team, a group of stakeholders working to implement the court's mandate.

In 1998, attorneys from four different legal aid organizations, including MHAS, came together to file *Emily Q. v. Bontá* (now *Emily Q. v. Belshe*), a class action seeking access to intensive, community-based mental health services for low-income children.

Emily suffered from serious mental illness resulting from trauma and abuse in her early childhood. She had spent the majority of her life institutionalized, often isolated and denied education, treatment, and privileges as a result of what institutional staff deemed dangerous and self-destructive behavior.

Experts testified that Emily and thousands of children like her would benefit from TBS. Advocates argued that by failing to provide TBS to these children, California was violating the Federal Medicaid Act.

Through one-on-one interaction, a TBS provider teaches a child how to interact with his or her environment appropriately and trains caregivers and educators how to effectively support the child. TBS has been proven to reduce challenging and destructive behavior. For children like Emily, this makes it possible for them to live in the com-



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# Someone to Love

*A woman asserts her right to keep an emotional support animal*

“Liz” contacted MHAS last summer with a dilemma. Suffering from severe, debilitating depression, her doctor strongly urged her to get a dog as part of her therapy. Emotional support animals have been proven extremely effective at ameliorating the symptoms of mental disabilities, such as depression and post-traumatic stress disorder.

But like many people in Los Angeles, Liz lives in an apartment building that has a “No Pets” policy. Liz and her doctor strongly believed that the nurturing relationship with a pet would be very beneficial to her recovery. She asked MHAS to help her negotiate with her landlord.

Summer Associate Ryan Lean, a law student from Loyola, handled Liz’s case. After several conversations with Liz and her landlord, Ryan sent a letter to the property manager describing Liz’s condition and her legal right to a reasonable accommodation of her disability. He pointed out that an emotional support animal

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## Remembering George Hedges

Long-time MHAS Board Member George Hedges passed away on March 10, 2009, at the age of 57. A member of the MHAS Board since 1983, Hedges was a prominent entertainment attorney.



A partner at Quinn Emanuel Urquhart Oliver & Hedges, he represented the Producers Guild as well as production companies, TV networks, actors, directors and talent agencies. Hedges was also a noted archaeologist.

He was a dedicated supporter and good friend of MHAS for more than 25 years. He will be missed.

### **MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCACY SERVICES, INC.,**

is a private non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation. The mission of MHAS is to protect and advance the legal rights of children and adults with mental disabilities, in order to maximize autonomy, promote equality, and secure the resources needed to thrive in the community.

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## Emily Q

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munity rather than in restrictive (and costly) institutions.

TBS had long been acknowledged as a successful treatment component for children with developmental disabilities, but the evidence and expert testimony in the *Emily Q.* case opened the way for children with mental illness to benefit from the same treatment.

Since the favorable final judgment in the case, issued in 2001, the court has maintained jurisdiction to oversee the implementation of the decision. To change the focus of treatment for children with severe emotional problems from institutionalization to community-based services including TBS has been a challenging process.

Jim Preis works with the *Emily Q.* Settlement Team to create system-wide reform and bring life-changing therapies to children throughout the state. The Team's nine-point implementation plan includes reducing the administrative burden for county agencies, increasing training for providers, and improving the quality of services. At the same time, MHAS attorneys continue to represent individual children to ensure that they are receiving the critical services that will allow them to thrive and to which they are entitled.

## Fair Housing

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MHAS Staff Attorney  
Carey Stone

and he was being threatened with eviction.

Recognizing that the medication was the problem, he tried to stop taking it, but the same housing staff insisted that he was required to continue taking his meds in order to stay. Caught in this paradox, he turned to MHAS for help; Stone was able to resolve the

situation and the client was able to stay in his housing with the support he needed. (See "*Someone to Love*" on page 2 for more about MHAS' fair housing advocacy)

Through the new project's outreach, MHAS will be able to provide more individuals with the tools they need protect their rights. If you are interested in receiving the Tip of the Month or would like more information about training, you can sign up for the Fair Housing mailing list at [www.mhas-la.org](http://www.mhas-la.org).

## Dodger Night Hits a Home Run

It was one, two, three strikes, and the Oakland A's were out as the Dodgers brought home a 3-2 victory to the delight of MHAS' supporters and nearly 100 foster children from our partner agencies.



This year's Dodger Night event sold out - a total of 230 tickets - and MHAS' sections were filled with enthusiastic fans.

Thanks to this year's Home Run Sponsors: Jane and Ken Anderson, Anonymous, Douglas L. Hall, Shirley and Matthew Kirby, Alan R. Polsky, and the law firm of Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher, & Flom. Thank you also to Coaches' Club Sponsor Rhino Entertainment.

## Pro Bono Website Offers Volunteer Opportunities

MHAS is proud to be one of seven founding organizations that have partnered to launch SoCal Pro Bono Center, a new website that supports pro bono legal services by linking private attorneys, law students and other advocates with legal services providers throughout Southern California.

Those who are interested in volunteering with MHAS can visit [www.socalprobono.org](http://www.socalprobono.org). Prospective volunteers can access a Programs Guide that includes descriptions and contact information for more than 50 pro bono programs, including MHAS, explore a database of legal clinics, and view a Pro Bono Calendar that features upcoming events and trainings especially designed for pro bono attorneys and students.

The SoCal Pro Bono Center is part of the national Pro Bono Net network, a national nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing access to justice through innovative uses of technology and increased volunteer lawyer participation.

## New Ways to Support MHAS

Visit [www.mhas-la.org](http://www.mhas-la.org) to find two new ways to support MHAS and stay up-to-date with our latest events, programs, and cases.

Our Amazon.com Wish List gives you the opportunity to support MHAS by directly purchasing much-needed supplies and equipment. You can help us help our clients by providing these essential tools.



facebook

Get the latest news from MHAS by finding us on Facebook. See pictures from events, learn about

our latest projects, and connect with others who care about people with mental disabilities.

Look for the Wish List and Facebook links on the left side of the MHAS homepage.

## Someone to Love

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*Emotional support animals have been proven extremely effective at ameliorating the symptoms of mental disabilities*

can provide as much assistance as a seeing-eye dog or other service animal. With Ryan's help, Liz was allowed to have her dog.

Liz's case is a common one, according to MHAS Staff Attorney Carey Stone. Many landlords are unaware that people with mental disabilities are entitled to the same rights and accommodations as people with physical disabilities, and MHAS has helped many clients like Liz.

Research suggests that people with psychiatric disabilities can benefit significantly from assistive animals. It's a simple accommodation that can make a profound difference in the life of someone with a disability.

MENTAL HEALTH  
ADVOCACY  
SERVICES

*Protecting and advancing the rights of people with mental disabilities since 1977.*

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