

## NOW Mourns Passing of Two Committed Activists

### Remembering Del Martin

By Lisa Bennett

*Communications Director*

This summer the feminist and LGBT movements lost an extraordinary trailblazer.

"Along with NOW activists everywhere, I am terribly saddened at the passing of longtime NOW and lesbian rights activist Del Martin," said NOW President Kim Gandy in a statement issued on Aug. 27. "We extend our love and condolences to Del's wife, Phyllis Lyon, who was her partner in life and in activism for more than half a century."

Gandy continued: "Del was truly an inspiration to me and to countless others who fight every day for lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender rights."

Martin and Lyon were married not once but twice in California -- most recently this June, when they became the first couple to wed after same-sex marriage became legal in the state.

Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) honored Martin, stating: "We would not have marriage equality in California if it weren't for Del and Phyllis. They fought and triumphed in many battles, beginning when they first bought a home together in San Francisco in 1955."

Martin was one of the first out lesbians to serve on NOW's national board. In 1976, she co-chaired NOW's first national Task Force on Battered Women/Household Violence.

Martin authored the groundbreaking book *Battered Wives*, among many impressive accomplishments during her 87 years. Together with Lyon, Martin founded the first national lesbian rights organization, the Daughters of Bilitis, in 1955 and wrote another pivotal book, *Lesbian/Woman*.

The American Psychiatric Association no longer designates homosexuality as a mental illness thanks in part to Martin's efforts. Lyon-Martin Health Services, a clinic named for the two women and founded in 1979, provides nonjudgmental, affordable health care--including mental health services--to women and transgender individuals.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) named Martin a delegate to the 1995 White House Conference on Aging, where she and Lyon, appointed by Rep. Pelosi, addressed the needs of aging LGBT people.

At NOW's Lesbian Rights Summit in 1999, Gandy was honored to present Martin and Lyon with Woman of Courage Awards. They stood before a standing-room-only crowd and noted



*Photo by BJ Davis*

**Del Martin (center) and her partner in life and activism, Phyllis Lyon, received Woman of Courage awards from Kim Gandy at NOW's 1999 Lesbian Rights Summit.**

how far we've come as a movement; Martin emphasized the need "to unite as never before and face the grip that the extreme right wing holds over our country."

"We owe a great deal to Del," said Gandy. "She was a true pioneer who never tired, never gave up on her mission to secure full equality for each of us. Del's work will continue to touch the lives of future generations, and her spirit will live on in the work of NOW and our allies."

Read tributes to Del Martin and submit your own on NOW's website at: [www.now.org/history/delmartin.html](http://www.now.org/history/delmartin.html).

### Remembering Jana Mackey

By Christie Brungardt

*Guest Writer*

The most unlikely of domestic violence victims, my daughter, Jana Mackey, was found dead in her ex-boyfriend's home on July 3, 2008. Jana was a 25-year-old law school student at the University of Kansas, an advocate for women's rights, and had spent years volunteering to aid survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence. As an active member of the Kansas NOW chapter, Jana fought for equality and social justice at every turn. If Jana can become another domestic violence statistic, all women are vulnerable.

As an undergraduate Women's Studies student, Jana organized the Kansas delegation of women (seven buses) who marched on Washington, D.C., in 2004. From 2004-2006 Jana was one of the youngest lobbyists at the Kansas State Capitol, where she represented Kansas NOW, the Kansas Equality Coalition and Pro-KanDo (state pro-choice PAC). In describing her work at the Capitol, David Klepper from the

Kansas City Star wrote, "She was often on the losing side, but she never lost heart." As a long-term volunteer and advocate at the GaDuGi SafeCenter (a rape crisis center in Lawrence, Kansas), Jana was described as "honey on steel."

Jana had become a skilled negotiator, and she believed that a law degree was the next step in her journey to become the most effective advocate possible for women and other underrepresented groups.

On July 9, 1,100 people crammed into Lawrence, Kansas' Liberty Hall to hear about and celebrate Jana's life. The overflowing crowd was asked by the speakers at the event to pick up the young activist's torch and carry her work forward. The service concluded with her step-father saying, "This ceremony is not just about honoring and celebrating Jana's life -- it is also a call to action. On behalf of Jana, I ask you to serve and I ask you to make a difference."

Today, nearly two dozen family and friends



**Family photo of Jana Mackey**

have joined together to create Eleven Hundred Torches. Inspired by Jana's life, and motivated into action by her death, this national campaign has been created to inspire others to make a difference. Jana's legacy can live on with your help. We ask that you get involved and find a place to serve. Visit [www.1100torches.org](http://www.1100torches.org) to see how others have joined our movement.