

Appleseed This Week

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A nonprofit network of 16 public interest justice centers in the U.S. and Mexico, Appleseed is dedicated to building a society in which opportunities are genuine, access to justice is universal and equal, and government advances the public interest.

SAVE THE DATE!

On Thursday, March 25, 2010, Appleseed and Chicago Appleseed will proudly host our annual joint fundraising event, *Organizing for Change in Chicago*, at the Art Institute of Chicago. There, we will honor an outstanding individual, law firm and corporate

Protecting Elders from Abuse

Seeking to protect vulnerable seniors from abuse, neglect, and exploitation, Appleseed is delving into elder justice, a critical initiative that will apply the network's expertise in matters of law, policy, and advocacy to a growing yet widely ignored problem.

The aging of 77 million baby boomers, coupled with recent declines in the caregiving workforce, means that a rising number of seniors are likely to suffer physical, sexual, or psychological abuse; financial exploitation; wrongful deprivation of civil rights; and neglect by paid and unpaid caregivers. Yet victims of elder abuse currently lack effective advocates or sufficient legislative protection, while the prevention of domestic and child abuse, in comparison, has for decades enjoyed comprehensive and widespread support.

As a powerful advocate for those who slip through systemic gaps unprotected, Appleseed is therefore stepping in to help a population that lacks the care and attention it so badly needs.

According to Marie-Therese Connolly, senior scholar at Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and former coordinator for DOJ's Elder Justice and Nursing Home Initiative, between 80 and 90 percent of elder abuse cases go unreported, and there is little research to illuminate the issue. Leading to a 300 percent increase in premature death, elder abuse also costs billions of dollars annually as exploited elders lose their homes and life savings, while public programs are depleted by the high cost of treating preventable injuries and illnesses.

Some Appleseed Centers have already undertaken elder justice projects, and National Appleseed, having received approval from the Collaborative Projects Committee in November, now seeks to play a larger role in assisting elder abuse advocates, elevating

**leader for their
commitment to pro bono.**

Roger Pascal
Schiff Hardin LLP

Kirkland & Ellis LLP

William Von Hoene
Exelon Corporation

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the issue to the national agenda, adopting effective practices from relevant movements, and ultimately, ending elder abuse.

In collaboration with Connolly and an array of other experts and advocates, Appleseed is exploring how different aspects of the problem should be confronted and is seeking pro bono help. Not a single major national philanthropy has identified elder abuse as a priority, and unlike child abuse and domestic violence, no federal office has been created to address the issue.

Other major obstacles in the fight against elder abuse include severely limited funding from organizations holding a stake in the issue, as well as a lack of transparency in nursing homes that receive \$80 billion a year in public funds. Even less oversight exists for other long-term care settings.

Appleseed's initial research will likely focus on identifying ways to secure funding from, for example, public violence prevention programs that currently fail to address elder abuse, as well as bolstering advocacy. To inquire about pro bono opportunities, please contact Maggie Bertke at mbertke@appleseednetwork.org.