

GLAD bids Buseck farewell

By LAURA KIRITSY

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When Gary Buseck says "I've got GLAD in my blood," he's not kidding. Buseck has been involved in various capacities with Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders since 1979, spending the last six years as its executive director. So it's not surprising when he says he's finding it very hard to leave.

In January Buseck starts his new job as legal director for Lambda Legal, a national organization that, like GLAD does throughout New England, provides litigation, advocacy and education on issues affecting the civil rights of GLBT people and individuals with HIV/AIDS. Buseck will oversee the organization's legal department, which does litigation nationwide from offices in New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago, Atlanta and Dallas.

Margaret Williams, a GLAD board member and former board president, assumed the position of interim executive director on Dec. 16.

Though Buseck may have some separation anxiety, at least he's going out on a high note. GLAD won its biggest victory in November, when the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court (SJC) ruled in *Goodridge v. Department of Public Health* that denying same-sex couples access to civil marriage in Massachusetts is unconstitutional. GLAD attorney Mary Bonauto represented seven same-sex couples who sued the state in 2001 for the right to marry.

"It's certainly just a stunning victory for Mary and for GLAD," said Buseck. "I was thrilled just to be a part of it, and thrilled that it came down before I left."

But there's a victory that's closer to Buseck's heart: GLAD's efforts to beat back a challenge to the state's landmark law banning discrimination based on sexual orientation in employment, public accommodations, housing and credit.

Buseck was a cooperating attorney with GLAD when a 16-year legislative battle to pass the statewide gay and lesbian civil rights bill ended successfully in 1989. No sooner had Gov. Michael Dukakis signed the bill into law than conservative forces mounted an effort to repeal the law via voter referendum. Attorney General Jim Shannon refused to approve the ballot question,

and the repeal proponents took their case to the SJC. Buseck, along with Assistant Attorney General Ed Mogilnicki, argued before the justices against allowing the referendum to proceed on behalf of 10 state legislators who had supported the legislation. The SJC ruled that the gay and lesbian civil rights law could not be subjected to a referendum, handing the gay community - and GLAD - a major victory.

"Winning that probably was for me, personally, the one that means a great deal to me because I was closer to it as a lawyer," said Buseck.

Buseck has shared in many other victories during his years with GLAD, including *Baker v. Vermont*, which resulted in that state's civil union law; and *Bragdon v. Vermont*, a 1998 case in which the U.S. Supreme Court ruled people with HIV were protected from discrimination under the Americans With Disabilities Act; and *E.N.O. v. L.M.M.*, a 1999 case in which the SJC ruled that a non-biological lesbian mother who parented her son from birth is a de facto parent with the right to seek visitation.

Buseck sums up his tenure with the 25-year-old GLAD this way: "Boy, was I lucky, to be here and be involved at this time."

Not only has he watched the organization grow - GLAD's staff doubled in size under Buseck's watch - he has seen gay civil rights issues come squarely into the forefront of the public consciousness. "It's been very fortunate for me," says Buseck.