Lambda Legal began with its name on a Band-Aid on my apartment mailbox and a $25 bank account. When I founded the organization in 1973, the idea of legal defense and education funds was in the air. The National Organization for Women had created one, and there was the Native American Legal Defense and Education fund and the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund. It was part of the ethos at the time.

I had been offering legal assistance to an organization called the Gay Activists Alliance. Their political work involved courting politicians to support gay and lesbian causes. They also held more radical actions, like sit-ins. While I was there it occurred to me that something like Lambda Legal would be a good idea for lesbians and gay men, so I began doing the paperwork. I followed the Puerto Rican Legal Defense Fund’s workshop word for word, except I changed the beneficiaries because we believed in the cause — equality for LGBT communities.

The defense department settled that case, and we later took cases involving access in federal prisons to gay publications, a couple custody cases, and an immigration case. We had quite a cross-section from the beginning, and since we had no publicity budget it was surprising how quickly we became known. We met how quickly we became known. We met

I was president and chief cook and bottle washer for the first five years. I think in our best year we probably raised $50,000. That was worth a good deal more then than it is now, but it still wasn’t a great deal of money. I took a couple fundraisers, but we were inexperienced. It felt at times like we were just muddling through. We were fairly cautious about the costs can add up.

It felt at times like we were just muddling through. We were fairly cautious about the court battle that would reach the highest court in the land. The National Organization for Women had created one, and there was the Native American Legal Defense and Education fund and the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund. It was part of the ethos at the time.

From the beginning, we had two roles: being a successful legal advocacy organization and the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund. It was part of the ethos at the time.

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The defense department settled that case, and we later took cases involving access in federal prisons to gay publications, a couple custody cases, and an immigration case. We had quite a cross-section from the beginning, and since we had no publicity budget it was surprising how quickly we became known. We met one a month as a board and we would discuss the facts of a case, the resources it would take and the opportunity for the case to be precedent-setting. The key to being a successful legal advocacy organization is to get the best factual case you can.

Those of us who were there in the beginning were involved because we believed in the cause — equality for LGBT communities."

"Iowa has been on the forefront of marriage law, common sense and equal rights — making it quite believable that granting equal rights to people ‘happened in iowa.’"

Des Moines Register on the Iowa District Court’s ruling that denying marriage rights to same-sex couples is unconstitutional

SEPTEMBEr 1, 2007

"The Board of Education reversed course after members learned over the weekend that Lambda Legal...had issued a statement that called the district’s pursuit [to challenge the] state human rights law “unconscionable.” Lambda Legal believes that neither federal or state education law protects LGBT students against antigay discrimination and harassment."

Editorial in the New York Times in support of marriage rights for same-sex couples

NOVEMBER 11, 2007

Lambda Legal In the News

Lambda Legal’s partnerships with the business community have played an integral role in our successes. Thousands of companies nationwide help support our litigation, education and public policy work through workplace giving and matching gift programs.

Workplace giving programs make it easy to support Lambda Legal. If your employer offers this program, you can sign up to have a contribution deducted from your paycheck and sent to Lambda Legal on a regular basis. You will receive a tax deduction for your charitable contribution as well as the satisfaction of helping Lambda Legal remain at the forefront of the fight for equality.

Some employers also offer matching gift programs, which can double or even triple the impact of your contribution. If you work for a company that offers a matching gift program, be sure to include a matching gift form (available from your employer) when you make your contribution to Lambda Legal.

To learn more about how you can participate in your workplace giving programs, check with your employer or contact Sarah Ogden at 212-809-8585, ext. 226 or sogden@lambdalegal.org.