

Inspirational Role Models

By Alex Dery Snider

For the first time, NRC for Women & Families has an internship program named for individuals whose idealism and accomplishments have inspired our work.

Caitlin McCormick, a second-year student at Boston University School of Law, was our Ted



Weiss Intern this past summer. Caitlin worked on our Lung Cancer and Women

project, as well as several other women's health issues.

Rep. Weiss was born in Hungary in 1927 and fled Nazi tyranny with his family at the age of 10 on the last



passenger ship out of Hamburg, Germany before World War II.

"Ted spent his life working on behalf of the most vulnerable women, men, and children in the world. I was privileged to work for him, learn from him, and be inspired by him, from 1985 until his death," says NRC president Diana Zuckerman.



Allison Harris, a student at American University Washington

College of Law, worked on behalf of the Violence Against Women Act and was responsible for our Center's study of FDA advisory committee voting patterns. Allison's internship is named in memory of Marcy Gross.

Ms. Gross was a nationally respected advocate for women's health and formerly a



senior adviser with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. She was instrumental in our Center's efforts to improve the quality of medical care for women with breast cancer, helping to guide us in our first national conference on the topic in 2001 and our efforts to reduce unnecessary mastectomies. In April 2005, she traveled hundreds of miles to testify at an FDA advisory panel meeting about the need for long-term safety research on silicone breast implants.

Ms. Gross helped build the foundation for federal policies regarding violence against women and was a strong voice for research-based medical treatment. Her work informed a provision in the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 and the federal Healthy Start Program.

"She was incredibly effective," explains Diana Zuckerman. "When she cared about a project, she knew how to make it happen."

She passed away unexpectedly from heart disease on June 19, 2005.



Laura Levitt, a law student at University of Virginia School of Law, focused on health policy

pertaining to breast implants and environmental exposures as the Marc Lappé intern.

Following in Dr. Lappé's footsteps to improve health policy and help those harmed by environmental exposures and harmful implants, Laura focused on improving FDA policies and also helped the Center provide health and safety information through NRC's online health hotline.

Dr. Marc Lappé was a leading voice in the environmental and anti-biotechnology movements.

An author, medical ethicist, and toxicologist, he helped shape important environmental and health public debates and policies.



In 1978, Dr.

Lappé became California's head of the Office of Health, Law and Values and later headed up the state's Hazard Evaluation System. He resigned in 1980 after he opposed the state's spraying of Malathion.

He worked as an expert witness in court cases involving chemical companies and medical device companies, including Agent Orange, silicone gel breast implants, and the high-profile case popularized in a best-selling book and movie, "A Civil Action." He was an expert that Diana Zuckerman relied on for scientific advice when she worked on some of these issues for Rep. Ted Weiss. Dr. Lappé died in 2005 at the age of 62.