

November 2, 2004

American Medical Women's Association (AMWA),
c/o Local Legends,
801 North Fairfax Street, Suite 400
Alexandria, VA 22314

Nomination of Linda Piwowarczyk, MD, MPH

To the Awards Committee:

I am honored to nominate Dr. Linda Piwowarczyk as a Local Legend. Dr. Piwowarczyk practices psychiatry at the Boston Center for Refugee Health and Human Rights. She cares for survivors of torture, slavery, oppression, and war. Her patients have suffered terrible injuries, both physical and psychic, and most are grieving the loss of close friends and relatives. Lin, as she is called, sees an essential connection between health and human rights, and I believe that her clinical work succeeds, in no small part, because she helps people regain their sense of dignity and worth as human beings.

Her practice includes many women who have suffered sexual assault in the context of civil and international conflicts. The Center has had good results from women's groups, who meet to talk and cook together. In sharing a common activity, they learn to trust each other and to share their experiences as well. They support one another in moving beyond tragedy, resuming education, finding employment, becoming, once more, contributing members of a community. Lin's psychotherapy empowers her patients to help one another.

Dr. Piwowarczyk works with fine *pro bono* lawyers and with my office to support political asylum applications and to reunite families of refugees and asylum seekers. She writes, with insight, about the "powerful and complex impact of trauma on people's lives." Shame and anxiety may keep people from seeking asylum. An asylum hearing must attempt to establish a true account of the applicant's experiences. Thus, in order to secure a patient's freedom to remain in the United States, she must assist them in reliving their trauma. She gives them courage to persevere and hope that, once asylum is granted, their surviving spouses and children may join them here, and she shares their joy at the happy endings.

One wishes our world did not need Lin Piwowarczyk as badly as it does, but we do need her and we should honor her.

Sincerely,

Michael E. Capuano
Member of Congress
8th Massachusetts