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5 - The North Jersey Suburbanite-Wednesday March 12, 1986

Former director wins temporary unemployment benefits

SOS termination charges v. Ramos bared

By Dan M. Bergin
Staff Writer

TEANECK - Sandra Ramos, the founder and former executive director of the Save Our Sisters shelter for battered women, was fired by the group's board of trustees in January for alleged sexual misconduct, mismanagement, insubordination and inducing persons to commit perjury, according to her termination letter.

It is the first time that the allegations against Ms. Ramos have been made public; they were attached to a lawsuit filed in state Superior Court by the embattled former director.

The suit seeks reinstatement to her

\$25,000 a year position plus damages and costs. Ms. Ramos is also suing the board for libel and slander in the promulgation of the charges against her to the state unemployment insurance office after she applied for benefits. She is currently collecting a weekly \$214 unemployment check.

Ramos and the board had refused in the past to disclose the reasons for the termination, and trustees contacted yesterday declined to discuss the case or the specifics of the allegations which led to the dismissal.

In a four-paragraph letter dated Jan. 23 which notified Ms. Ramos of her termination, board chairman Ronald H. D'Angelo wrote: "The reasons for your

termination include, but are not limited to, subornation (in law, the act of instructing a witness to give false testimony), sexual misconduct, insubordination, mismanagement, improper supervision, and the board's dissatisfaction with other aspects of your performance."

'Crazy' charges

Ms. Ramos has continuously maintained her innocence and said she was never notified of any of the allegations in numerous performance evaluations conducted prior to her firing.

She conceded, though, that the board did express displeasure with her handling of the secondary housing phase of the

shelter program. Internal changes in her job description and staff reorganizations prevented effective oversight of the program, she maintained.

"The charges are an attempt to make people think I'm not credible ... they're crazy," said Ms. Ramos, arguing that none have been substantiated.

But according to Gail Mitchell, a Hackensack attorney who is representing SOS, the board will produce witnesses to confirm the allegations. "We have signed statements by shelter clients that corroborate the allegations and by some shelter employees," Ms. Mitchell said.

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FEDC seeks to expand redevelopment boundaries

Ramos, SOS battle over allegations that led to her dismissal

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She would not disclose the number of witnesses or identify them, claiming, "I don't want to try this in the newspapers." Likewise, she would not reveal specific details of the allegations.

When asked about the witnesses, Ms. Ramos said, "They're going to be in a lot of trouble because that's a bunch of lies."

Regains benefits

Both sides are claiming victory in an order to show

cause hearing held last Thursday when a judge temporarily reinstated Ms. Ramos' non-salary employment benefits.

"We went there requesting reinstatement. Our position is that we prevailed," said Ida Castro, Ms. Ramos' attorney. State Superior Court Judge Sherwin Lester ordered the board "to allow her to rejoin the benefit program," Ms. Castro said.

"Both parties will appear and argue whether or not SOS is entitled to discharge

Sandra without cause," the Hackensack lawyer added, noting that a hearing will be held April 11.

Ms. Ramos said Friday: "The judge was really terrific. He identified the key issue — whether or not the shelter had a right to fire me. He was right on target. He seemed to understand."

Crediting Lester with "sensitivity," she added, "People who know me (know) that my only crime was helping the women."

The SOS trustees, on the other hand, maintain that

Ms. Ramos was an "at will" employee who served at the pleasure of the board of directors, according to attorney Marvin Gladstone. He said Ms. Ramos could be fired without cause.

Ms. Mitchell, who serves as associate counsel for SOS, called the judge's action "a win on our part." The judge "really didn't do anything. At any time you have employment ... you can extend insurance coverage. It

has nothing to do with that she was fired," Ms. Mitchell added, pointing out that a temporary restraining order, in which Ms. Ramos sought full reinstatement, was denied.

"We recognize her notorious stature ... that she's a very famous woman — that she has a reputation in the field of battered women's rights, but she is an employee at will," Ms. Mitchell continued.

Ms. Ramos founded the shelter at her home some 15 years ago and had served as the group's executive director since SOS was chartered in 1975 and began receiving federal money. The shelter has grown to include homes in Teaneck, Ramsey, Leonia and Bogota.

"I think (the case) is going in a good direction — it's just not going as quick as I'd like," Ms. Ramos said Friday.

Medical Center begins program

BERGEN COUNTY Hackensack Medical Center has established a multidisciplinary pain ser-

comprehensive cancer program. The service is under the direction of Richard J. Rosenbluth, M.D., chief of

Center's Pain Service is modeled after other successful programs around the country, notably the one at Sloan-Kettering

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