

Alison Arngrim's work as Nellie Oleson is well-known worldwide.

What's less-known is her role in overturning an archaic New York sex abuse law which basically allowed offenders to escape jail time.

Arngrim is a founder of the National Association to Protect Children. Also known as Protect, the organization has a political status similar to the American Association of Retired Persons, with a focus on protecting children from abuse, exploitation or neglect.

Described as an "incest exemption", the law essentially classified the crime as a Class E felony in the same category as adultery. Offenders closely related to their victims could potentially be given probation, as opposed with rape or similarly serious charges.

Arngrim's lobbying, including through The New York Post, helped forge a path through the state's labyrinthine legislative process to change the law and close the loophole in 2006.

Beyond her work on behalf of exploited children, Arngrim is also an AIDS activist, working on behalf of the disease's victims after her Little House on the Prairie co-star Steve Tracy died of the sickness.

-- By Matt Surtel