

Dec 1992?



Maine Lesbian/Gay Political Alliance

**PO Box 232
Hallowell ME 04347**

Special Election Called for January Meeting

Members will be electing several new directors and officers at the January 17 meeting. A number of resignations have led to the need for the election. The meeting will be held at 2 p.m. on Sunday, January 17 at the Unitarian Universalist Community Church at 69 Winthrop St., in Augusta.

Resignations and Busy Lives

The large number of vacancies is due to a number of circumstances, most having to do with busy lives. Board members found that they were just not able to fulfill their commitment to MLGPA because of the demands of work or families.

Legislative Challenge

The special election was called by Acting President Harry Gordon to bring the board back to full strength before the 116th Legislature gets to work. "Being successful in a legislature with so many new faces will take more than the remaining board can handle," Gordon said. "Educating new Legislators and countering the homophobia of the opposition will take much more work out in the districts. We have to be sure that those people in Augusta realize they are representing not only lesbians and gays but their friends and families and that discrimination and hatred are very real and painful."

"The message is clear," Gordon said, "We have twice examined the arguments against doing the bill again this year and rejected them. We have no rights. People are being discriminated against, marginalized, and hurt. We're going for it. To paraphrase the Governor, it's Free in '93--the way Maine ought to be!"

Candidates Welcome

Any member whose dues are paid is welcome to become a candidate for offices which are vacant. Elected will be President, Vice-President, Treasurer, four District Directors, and three At-large Directors. District seats open are 3, Waldo, Knox, Lincoln, and Sagadahoc; 6, Cumberland; and 7, York. The election fills unexpired terms which end at the Annual Meeting in the summer of 1993.

Nominations

Nominations committee Chair Ellie Goldberg and her lovely assistants Barbara Wood and Harry Gordon have already compiled an impressive list of candidates for the vacancies. They would like a few more aspiring or dedicated activists to add to the list.

Annual Dinner Moves to Brunswick

For the seventh time, members and friends of the Maine Lesbian/Gay Political Alliance will gather to honor those who have contributed to the civil rights movement in Maine. It is also a celebration of the community and is considered by many to be one of the state's premier social evenings.

MLGPA's Seventh Annual Gala Awards Dinner is scheduled for Saturday February 27, 1993 at the Atrium Inn at Cook's Corner in Brunswick. A full evening is planned, including special entertainment.

The evening begins at 5 p.m. with cocktails, followed by a sit-down dinner at 6:30. A brief awards ceremony will follow the speaker. Dancing will begin at 10. Plan now to attend.

Reservations

Invitations are being mailed separately to all members. If yours fails to arrive by mid-January, you may write or phone Judy Edgerly. The address: PO Box 136, Hallowell ME 04347. Phone 626-9309. Reservations must be made prior to February 24. Seating is limited.

Room Reservations

For those traveling long distances, or those planning to party, room reservations may be made at the inn at reasonable rates. Phone 729-5555.

Police Focus on Hate Crimes Statewide

Lesbians and gay men are included in a new program which will increase prosecution of crimes perpetrated because of a bias against minorities. An increase in crimes against racial, religious and ethnic minorities is the impetus of a new project within the Maine Attorney General's Office.

The centerpiece of the program is the formation of all-inclusive Human Rights Committees in cities and towns across Maine. Sensitizing police officers and educating the public are integral parts of the project.

Members of the lesbian/gay community were briefed on the program on December 6 by three representatives of law enforcement. Speaking were Deputy Attorney General Steve Wessler, AG Detective Margie Berkovich, and Portland Police Lt. Mark Dion.

see HATE CRIMES next page

First Organizational Meeting of Portland MLGPA Legislative Committee

Anyone interested in working in support of civil rights for lesbians and gay men at the state level is invited to attend an organizational meeting on January 11 at 7 p.m. at Campus Center C, at the Portland campus of the University of Southern Maine. There will be a variety of opportunities for involvement as well as information about the progress of the statewide effort.

This is to be the first of weekly meetings. For information on subsequent dates and times, call the Gay/Lesbian Information Line at 883-6934 or Larry Bliss at 767-4496.

HATE CRIMES

A statewide police training session has been held to brief local officers on the approach to bias crimes and mechanisms to sensitize their forces. Human rights officers have been appointed in most police departments in Maine. They will be responsible for forming committees from minority members of their cities or towns.

Lesbians and gay men are encouraged to contact their local police department to get the name of its human rights officer and to get involved in the committee work. The concept is an outgrowth of human rights committees which have been in operation in Portland and Lewiston.

Reporting of crimes is absolutely necessary.

The three representatives pointed out that to work, we must report hate crimes—either to local departments or to the attorney general's civil rights number, 626-8844. They added that with increasing sensitivity of local departments, reporting should be without trepidation. Report all crimes. Racial or sexual slurs and refusal of service are as illegal as violent crimes and robbery.

Steve Wessler outlined theoretical approaches to prosecuting hate crimes against lesbians and gay men.

1. First Amendment Theory—rationalizing that an assault is a first amendment infringement when circumstances surround a lesbian/gay political or social gathering.

2. That lesbians and gays are making a political statement when going to a bar or event.

3. Enforcing a Maine law requiring victualers "to serve all who come" when public accommodation is refused.

Wessler outlined amendments to the civil rights (hate crimes) statute being considered.

1. to include property destruction.

2. violation of court order becomes a crime.

3. to expand definition of public accommodation to include streets and parking lots.

4. considering an amendment that "anybody has a right to be free of harassment or violence because of minority status."

Call your local police department, or AG Steve Wessler at 626-8844.

Broadening the Dream: A Call for Equal Justice For All

Is the title of a conference on Lesbian/Gay Rights announced by the Unitarian Universalist Community Church in Augusta. Scheduled for January 16, the session is a primer on the Maine Civil Rights bill and how to lobby your legislator.

Opportunity for Clergy

This is an excellent opportunity for you to urge your clergy person to become involved in the fight against discrimination and to learn first-hand about discrimination and how the process works. The conference could be publicized to your congregation and minister by your social concerns chair.

Calling All Activists

If you have been thinking about getting active, this is also a chance for you. All you will need to know to bring you up to speed on our work will be covered in this session. You can graduate from here to MLGPA's Legislative Committee.

The Program

The morning will feature the sponsor of "An Act to Prevent Discrimination," Senator Gerard Conley of Portland, and a panel discussion. Following lunch (included), there will be workshops with Rep. Susan Farnsworth, the Mayor of Lewiston, City Councilors from Portland, and police officers. These experts will consider all aspects of discrimination against lesbians and gay men and how the bill would remedy the situation.

Space Limited

But, there is room for you, and at only \$5.00, lunch included, it is a deal. Preregister by mail at the church at 69 Winthrop St, Augusta ME 04330 or phone 622-3232.

Silent Auction At Dinner

Participants in the Seventh Annual Awards Dinner will be able to take part in a silent auction. This works by bidders submitting a card with the price they are willing to pay for an item listed in the auction. At the end of the evening, the successful bidders are announced.

Auction Items Needed

Organizers are looking for items to auction. Already an upright piano is listed. Donations could be an item you no longer have use for, to bodywork sessions, volunteer housecleaning, a date with a starlet, a week's vacation in a B&B, your favorite recliner, or anything. Be creative. Help us with this fun fundraising event.

Send information on your auction item to Paula Aboud, PO Box 34, S China ME 04358, or phone 455-2863. Send : 1. The item (if it is small) or a description of it. 2. A minimum bid price you think is acceptable. 3. Your name, address and phone number. Due date January 30.