

# NETWORK NEWS

*The Newsletter of the Maine Rural Network*

Vol. 1, No. 3

Winter 1998

## Calendar

**Dec. 5** - The Lesbian Health Project of the Mabel Wadsworth Women's Health Center in Bangor will be offering low-cost woman positive lesbian-centered health clinics, usually on the 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of every month from 9am-12 noon. 362 Harlow St., Intown Plaza, Bangor. FMI or to make an appointment ☎ 947-5337.

**Dec. 5** - Next statewide coalition meeting will be held in Bangor at the Hammond St. Church, 1-4pm.

**Dec. 6** - MAINE GAY MENS' CHORUS will perform a benefit concert for the Downeast AIDS Network. The concert will be at 2pm at the Grand Auditorium on Main Street in Ellsworth. Tickets available at the box office or ☎ David Cuthbertson at 469-2032 or Becky Stillman at 422-9542.

**Dec. 12** - Acadia Social Justice Alliance meeting, 3-5 pm, UU Church, 111 Court Street, Ellsworth. FMI ☎ Gabrielle 374-2140.

**Dec. 13** - Lewiston-based, Maine Rural Network social justice group forming. Come be a part of transforming your community. Meet at AIDS Coalition office of Lewiston/Auburn at 4pm. FMI ☎ Naomi at 642-2015.

**Feb. 6** - Foothills Fairness Alliance initial meeting.. Time and location to be announced. FMI☎ Brian 778-7379.

## Hate Crimes Escalate

With word of the death of Matthew Shepard in Wyoming, following the murder this summer of James Byrd in Texas, the specter of hate crimes in rural areas is brought to our attention, once again. It is a grim reminder of how much still needs to be done to make our communities safe and open to all of us, no matter how we differ from the illusory norm.

Maine Rural Network's (MRN) mission is to erode the ignorance and fear that makes it possible to believe that people like Matthew and James are dispensable. Until there is acceptance and willingness to take each other at face value, in reality, there is no safety for any of us.

There are a number of states, Wyoming among them, that have yet to pass even hate crimes legislation, let alone implement civil rights protections for their sexual minority populations. In Maine, the efforts continue to secure civil rights protection statewide. Continuing as well is the slow coastal progression of town by town ordinances guaranteeing civil rights to the LGBT population, which will not even begin to touch the areas most resistant to and most in need of this legislation. With the possibility of a reintroduction of the civil rights bill to the legislature by the year 2000, it becomes more and more essential that we reach people in our towns and let them know on a gut level what this means to us. To this end MRN is forming local groups, at least one in each county, to educate their own communities about civil rights issues for gay people and to

support other minority populations in their struggle to obtain civil rights. Working in coalition broadens our base of support, gains allies and knowledge of each other's struggles, as well as making it possible for people not yet out, to work within the framework of a multi-issue organization.

As this newsletter goes to print, there are several more MRN groups being organized. They are in Androscoggin, York, Franklin and Washington Counties. Come join us in the effort to make Maine a viable, safe, inclusive community for everyone.

### How To Get Involved

If you wish to join a group in one of the following areas, please phone the contact person listed:

Ellsworth  
Acadia Social Justice Alliance  
Gabrielle Wellman  
374-2140

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Farmington  
Foothills Fairness Project  
Brian Kaufman  
778-7379  
(see p. 4)

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Bowdoinham  
Theresa Turgeon/Gracia  
Woodward  
666-8147

If you are interested in forming a group in your area, please contact Naomi at 642-2015 or by e-mail: [nomad@watchic.net](mailto:nomad@watchic.net).





### **Maine Rural Network**

51 Shore Road  
Standish, ME 04084  
(207) 642-2015  
e-mail: nomad@watchic.net

Naomi Falcone  
Coordinator

### **Board of Directors**

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### **Mission Statement**

The mission of the Maine Rural Network is to promote visibility and security for lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgender people living in rural Maine, and to work for social, educational and economic justice for all Maine people. The Maine Rural Network seeks to accomplish this by empowering individuals living in rural Maine to organize, establish and support autonomous groups locally and to create a network statewide.

*Network News* is published quarterly in March, June, September and December. If you would like to contribute a calendar item or short article please send it to us by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month prior to the quarterly publication date.

Maine Rural Network  
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## **The Partial-Truth Initiative**

With the February 10th repeal of the prohibition on discrimination based upon sexual orientation, a newly energized radical right has picked their next target: Abortion. A coalition of anti-choice groups, including the Christian Civic League, and the Christian Coalition of Maine, are in the process of gathering signatures for a citizen initiated bill that would ban so-called "partial-birth abortions." The Catholic Church is working with this coalition to gather signatures. The Catholic Church has in fact broken from their long standing tradition and allowed the abortion ban petition inside the church, encouraging parishioners to sign it. If rejected by the legislature, the bill to ban abortions will go to referendum in the November 1999 general election. This bill is a near replica of the so-called "Partial-Birth Abortion" Ban bill rejected by the Maine Legislature in April, 1997.

The issues around so-called "partial-birth abortion" have been confusing to many people. Confusion was the intent of the proponents of this bill. Most people are not aware that there is no medical procedure known as "partial-birth abortion" and that the phrase "partial-birth abortion" was made up by anti-choice advocates to advance their political agenda. Anti-choice advocates have claimed that their intent is only to restrict a specific abortion procedure (correctly recognized as a Dilation and Extraction in the medical community), performed during the last trimester of a healthy pregnancy on a viable fetus. This is how this bill previously came to be known as a restriction on "late term abortions." In reality, how-

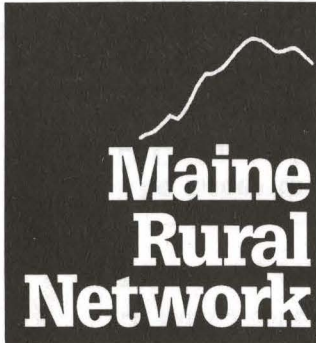

ever, medical experts have said the definition used in the legislation could include procedures done as early as the first trimester.

These bills are intentionally vague to disguise their true intent, which is to whittle away at a woman's right to choose abortion at any point in her pregnancy. The broad and vague language of so-called "partial-birth abortion" bans has been cited in courts around the nation as one of the reasons that these bans are unconstitutional. The Due Process Clause prohibits laws so vague that persons of ordinary intelligence must guess at their meaning. Most proposed bans on "partial-birth abortions" fail to provide physicians adequate notice as to which abortion methods they prohibit. Such bans would also subject physicians to arbitrary enforcement under unclear standards. The slippery slope of these bans was illustrated recently in Wisconsin. A judge refused to temporarily enjoin that state's so-called "partial-birth abortion" ban and physicians, legitimately fearing prosecution, refused to perform any abortions, even the procedure most commonly performed in the first trimester.

Why would any group of people squander valuable time and resources in an effort to pass legislation that will in all likelihood be ruled unconstitutional? This coalition continues their campaign because they see this as an opportunity to sway public opinion about abortion. To some extent they have been successful. As the pro-choice majority remains largely complacent and disengaged, anti-choice groups have used their graphic pictures

**51 Shore Road  
Standish, ME 04084**



		<p>Maine Rural Network is dedicated to the belief that we can speak with one voice in opposition to discrimination whatever our background, wherever we live. We have it in our hands to create safety and justice for all people of Maine, from those living in the most populated areas to those living in the most remote regions.</p>
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**51 Shore Road, Standish, ME 04084  
(207) 642-2015  
e-mail: [nomad@watchic.net](mailto:nomad@watchic.net)**



**Here's what I can do to help the Maine Rural Network:**

- Attend a meeting of a local social justice group
- Show the video *Not In Our Town* to neighbors and friends
- Hold a coffee to discuss ways the Radical Right affects us

**I have the following skills I can contribute:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**The issues that concern me the most are:**

- Civil rights for all       Living wages, better jobs
- Hate Crimes in Maine       Universal health care
- Defending women's right to reproductive choice
- Safer schools       Access to secondary education
- The growing influence of the Radical/Religious Right
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

I believe that human dignity is the basic right of every person.  
I want Maine Rural Network to bring that message to all parts of the state.

- Individual    Household    Activist    Organizer    Visionary
- \$20     \$35     \$50     \$100     \$250     \$\_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: day \_\_\_\_\_ evening \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Your contribution for our educational efforts is tax-deductible.

- I'd like to join a local social justice group. Please contact me.



December 3, 1998

Dear MRN members and supporters:

In the early 1980s, a measure was placed on the ballot in California restricting teaching positions to those who would not in any way condone homosexuality in the classroom. It was known as the Briggs Initiative. The lesbian and gay community in California responded to this measure by going door-to-door in their own neighborhoods and saying, "Hi, I'm your neighbor and I'm gay and the Briggs Initiative is about discriminating against me." This grassroots effort was extremely effective and ultimately not only helped to defeat the initiative but made lesbian and gay people much more visible and tangible to their neighbors.

So, what has this got to do with Maine in the 1990s you might well ask? In its essence, this concept is what MRN is all about. It is about talking to the people you see everyday about who you are. It is about how being singled out by the radical right impacts your life and the lives of the other people in your community. It is about making the connections to others who may be the next targets and saying we will not allow anyone else to be attacked, either. This is important work and is the only statewide effort to organize people in rural, often isolated areas to help them create safe, viable communities. Communities that understand that their strength is in the diversity of their population and in the contributions made by all the members of the community.

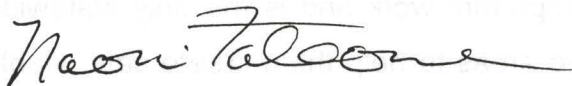
With the establishment of MRN across the state, we are beginning to reach and impact communities that are often unaware of the range of people that compose their population. It is the mission MRN to end the silence and isolation that allows people to believe that only one set of beliefs is valid in a pluralistic society.

MRN is committed to making Maine the way it should be for everyone. The following is a partial list of ways we expect to make a difference:

- Outreach to those targeted by hate crimes in each town
- The formation of coalitions with Acadians and farmworkers in Lewiston
- Working with Native Americans to end racism, including environmental racism
- Working for economic and social justice in Aroostook County
- Outreach to blueberry pickers in Washington County
- Promoting safety and visibility for sexual minorities all over Maine

Many of you have contributed time, inspiration, and expertise to MRN and much of your effort has made the establishment MRN possible. Now, MRN is asking you to take one more step by making a tax deductible donation to help fund a vision of Maine that embraces everyone and demonstrates that diversity is a resource and not something to fear.

Sincerely,



Naomi Falcone  
Coordinator  
Maine Rural Network

*P.S. Won't you write a check today to further demonstrate your belief that human dignity is the basic right of every person and that you want the Maine Rural Network to bring that message to all parts of Maine.*



and partial-truth language to dominate public discourse, pressuring those who have historically been supporters of reproductive rights and persuading them to vote against reproductive rights on this issue.

For the record, Maine already has a law that states, "After viability an abortion may be performed only when it is necessary to preserve the life or health of the mother." And although women in Maine have access to elective abor-

tions during the first trimester (twelve weeks), finding a provider in Maine to perform an elective abortion past that point is difficult if not impossible. For anti-choice advocates to suggest that women from Maine are routinely terminating healthy pregnancies during the second and third trimester is inaccurate and irresponsible.

The pro-choice majority needs to speak up. Continued complacency will cost us the right to make deeply personal decisions free from governmental interference. The Maine Choice

Coalition and the Campaign to protect Women's Health (the campaign committee that has been organized to fight this ban), are gearing up, but we will need help to educate our allies about why this abortion ban is so dangerous. For more information about a few simple things you can do to fight this initiative, contact Nancy A. Foss at the Maine Civil Liberties Union, (207) 774-5444.

\* \* \*

## **Community Bulletin Board**

### **Help Needed...**



The Civil Rights March committee is accepting contributions to help retire the remainder of the debt incurred in organizing the march.

Contact Ron Hersom at 941-0969  
for further information

### **Family Crisis Services**

is looking to Cumberland and Sagadahoc counties' GLBT community to help guide them in an outreach and educational effort about same-sex domestic violence. Any input you have regarding the needs of victims or the best way to reach out and make services safe and accessible is welcome. Next task force meeting is 1/11/99, 8:30am. Contact Jen Collins at 874-8512 with questions and/or RSVPs.

### **Volunteer Opportunities**

If you have time on your hands, Maine Rural Network could use your help a few hours a week for miscellaneous office-type stuff. FMI ☎ Naomi at 642-2015.

### **Grant and Scholarship Awards**

☆☆☆

The Maine Rural Network would like to thank the Gill Foundation, RESIST and the Haymarket People's Fund for their support of and belief in our work to organize rural Maine.

# MRN's Foothills Fairness Project to Meet February 6th

by Brian Kaufman

Do you love your country? Do you love Maine? Do you love democracy? In the month of February our nation honors radical activists and leaders George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. We also celebrate Valentine's Day, when we express our love and appreciation of others. This year, join kindred progressive spirits from Farmington and neighboring towns in showing your love for democracy and your concern for protecting basic human rights for all as the Foothills Fairness Project has its inaugural organizing meeting on February 6.

Around the nation, communities are acknowledging that some basic assumptions about human rights - those that are provided for in the Constitution, are under attack by radical religious extremists and by others who simply want to exclude women and other minorities from inclusion in our democratic process.

A democracy is based upon participation by all citizens who enjoy equal protection under the law and who are educated on the issues that affect their lives. Recently, a law that would have made it illegal to discriminate against gay citizens was overturned in a popular citizens referendum. Without this law, your

gay neighbors and friends (yes, you have gay neighbors and friends!) can lose their jobs, be denied credit, get evicted from their homes, and be refused service in places which serve the public. Around Maine, bullies in our public schools threaten intimidate, and physically assault students of color, making those minority students afraid to be at school. Vandals have used intimidation to try to instill fear among members of the Jewish communities in Auburn and Presque Isle by defacing their houses of worship.

All of these acts represent attempts to keep some groups of individuals in our Maine communities from fully participating in the democratic way of life that has been the beacon of hope and faith for more than two centuries in the United States.

The Foothills Fairness Project will bring together a network of citizens committed to ensuring economic justice, educational opportunities, and freedom from legislation which would erode basic human rights for all. Please consider bringing a friend or two to our important organizational meeting. Call Brian at 778-7379 for more information about the meeting time and place.

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## Great Gift Idea

by Erica Rand

Do your newly union-ized couple-friends already have a toaster? Does your lover really want more heart-shaped trinkets? Is your birthday pal or parent about to smile weakly at Nice Try Number 37? Think about giving a gift that contributes to something they don't have: the joy of witness-

ing social and economic justice for all peoples.

A donation to MRN in someone's honor makes a great gift for many occasions. At the very least, your gift helps spread the word about MRN, since the honoree gets a membership, the newsletter, AND A FABULOUS

DECAL if you give \$20 or more. You might even be helping to get them involved -- in MRN, in other activism, in Maine or wherever they live.

Now really...given all that your MRN gift can do, won't you think twice before you head to the tie rack?

I believe that human dignity is the basic right of every person.  
I want Maine Rural Network to bring that message to all parts of Maine.

Individual  
 \$20

Household  
 \$35

Activist  
 \$50

Organizer  
 \$100

Visionary  
 \$250

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: day \_\_\_\_\_ evening: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Your contribution for our educational efforts is tax-deductible.

I'd like to join a local social justice group. Please contact me.