

Maggie Allen named MLGPA President

New leadership, major web project punctuate new era for MLGPA

BY TONY GIAMPETRUZZI

In September, the membership of MLGPA elected long-time movement activist and educator, Maggie Allen to succeed David Garrity as the new President of the Board of Directors. Allen, former two-term vice-president, has been quick to outline an exciting new vision for the organization, one which promises a renewed agenda, a broader focus, and a sense of purpose that is finally anchoring the organization as a force to be reckoned with. "We face some real challenges,"

says Allen. "After 18 years, we are still mostly an all-volunteer organization focused on very specific functions and services, namely acting as the legislative advocate of the LGBT community. That will certainly continue to be a major role of MLGPA, but the reality is that our community needs and wants a more broadly focused organization."

Allen's first task? Build community.

A lot of political activity in the state has taken its toll in



MLGPA/MDA's new president, Maggie Allen (right) and vice president, Robin Lambert (left)

recent years," says Allen of the several equal rights campaigns that often tore the gay community apart rather than pulling it together.

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Meet the New Board

Denise Arsenault is the former Co-coordinator of Sister Space and member of the Rainbow Business & Professional Association. Denise lives in South Portland with her two children (12 and 10).

Linda Conti has been Assistant Attorney General since 1988. A member of the Unitarian Universalist Community Church in Augusta, she currently serves on the Religious Education Committee and teaches religious education to 4th and 5th graders. In 1999-2000 she served as

the community advisor to the Buker Middle School civil rights team. An active member of the Lincoln School Parent Teacher Club, she resides in Augusta with her ten year old son.

Jane Gilbert is Director of the Office of Human Resources for the Maine Department of Transportation, where she is responsible for Personnel, Labor Relations, Training, Health & Safety

"One of the greatest joys of being President of this year's Board of Directors IS this year's Board of Directors! I could use up all of this edition's copy space singing their virtues. Here's a highly encapsulated and alphabetized version:"

Maggie Allen

and Equal Employment Opportunity. Most recently, she was Director of Equal Opportunity/Labor Relations

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Letter from the President (sort of)

Welcome to the first edition of the newsletter from the new board of MLGPA. You will see many changes both in layout and content over the next few editions, The newsletter will represent the combined efforts of many on our board and in the community. I am pleased to announce that our new editor is Mark Sullivan. Many of you may know Mark as Communications Director for U.S. Representative Tom Allen. Our layout and design diva is Virginia Slawson. We are very fortunate to have them join the newsletter team.

Another major change will be in response to the results of the membership survey. In the section "What newsletter features do you most enjoy or would you like to see?", there were many surprises! Overwhelmingly, folks wanted to read *Reports from the Legislature and Board Actions and Activities*. Tied in the third place were *National News, News from the Civic League and Christian Coalition* and *Interviews/articles of Prominent Elected Officials*. Few selected an *LGBT Calendar* and there were comments about the "tardiness" of the calendar. Almost NO ONE out of ten potential items to choose from checked *Letter from the President!!*

We hear you loud and clear!!!! The newsletter is one of the most important benefits of being a member. It is our goal that the newsletter reflects your interests, needs and concerns. Please feel free to contact me at sueandmaggi@clinic.net if you have any ideas, suggestions, or just want to chat. Thank you!

(New leadership cont. from page 1)

"Unfortunately, we are fractionalized, but we do all have our eyes on the same prize."

Increasing membership and working with coalition partners to come together are just a couple ways that Allen sees short-term success. Allen says that building community is the key, and she expects to mount a massive membership drive, ramp up the political action component of MLGPA, and forge stronger, more cohesive bonds with coalition members.

Allen has also announced a capital web site project as one of her highest priorities.

"Maine's LGBT community has lacked a clearinghouse of information, links to their legislators, message portals, up-to-the-minute news," says Allen. "That's just some of what a new, comprehensive web site will provide everyone, and we plan to market the hell out of it."

As an educator, Allen recognizes that the future of quality gay life in Maine is dependent on the state's youth. That's why she also intends to bolster MLGPA's Scholarship Program in short order. Every year MLGPA sends packets to each of Maine's high schools encouraging graduating seniors to write essays about diversity, and, on graduation day, two Maine students actually receive a significant cash contribution to their post-secondary endeavors.

"There's a lot to be done, but we'll be doing it differently, involving more people, sharing more information, and most important, making sure that we are financially stable," says Allen. "Everyone wants to be an important part of their community now, and we are going to become the savvy, well-funded organization that will be the key to helping them affect positive change in and around their communities."

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Charles Veilleaux

MLGPA News is the bi-monthly publication for MLGPA members. Story ideas, comments, and questions are always welcome and can be directed to:

MLGPA

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**18TH ANNUAL MLGPA AWARDS BANQUET
NOMINATION REQUEST FORM**

Every year the Maine Lesbian/Gay Political Alliance, in partnership with its educational organization, the MLGPA Foundation, holds a gala awards banquet to celebrate individuals and organizations that have made significant contributions to social justice and equal rights for Maine's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered community.

This year marks MLGPA's 18th annual awards banquet. The banquet will be held **Saturday, March 30th at the Holiday Inn by the Bay in Portland** with festivities beginning at 6 p.m. and the awards ceremony at 8 p.m.

By tradition, all award recipients are selected through a community nomination process. The process is open to any person or group wishing to make a nomination. MLGPA's nomination committee reviews all nominations and recipients are recognized during the awards program.

MLGPA is interested in learning about and supporting the diverse and exceptional work that many individuals and organizations do on behalf of our community. We at MLGPA realize that often at times, the struggles and accomplishments of our community go unrecognized and under-appreciated. **We hope that you will take this opportunity to nominate any individual or organization you feel deserves public recognition for their work, their ideas and their accomplishments—no matter how large or small they may seem.**

Below are descriptions of the awards with a few of the exceptional recipients recognized in the past.

- **GREAT PIONEER AWARD**- for an achievement that embodies bold new vision or courageous breakthrough in our struggle for equality. Recipients include: *Governor Angus King, Dale McCormick, Mabel Wadsworth Women's Health Center, Jean Vermette and Michael Rossetti.*
- **LARRY CONNOLLY AWARD**- for outstanding service by a Maine public official. Named in memory of one of the first sponsors of our anti-discrimination bill. Recipients include: *Gerald Talbot, Gerald Conley Jr., Tom Andrews, Susan Farnsworth and Joel Abromson.*
- **CAMERON DUNCAN AWARD**- for extraordinary accomplishment, commitment and service within the AIDS community. Named after Cameron Duncan, who openly shared his life and gave AIDS a face for the people of Maine. Past recipients include: *Frannie Peabody, Myles Rightmire, Peter Haffenreffer, Tom Antonik, Nancy Bullett and Ron King.*
- **F.E. PENTLARGE AWARD**- for exceptional work that upholds and promotes families within our community. Effie founded PFLAG in Maine and never stopped working for equal rights. Recipients include: *Sally & Eugene Debor, Mare & Laurie Wallace, Peter Rees, Susan Comyns, Lois Reckitt and Effie herself.*
- **MEDIA AWARD**- for exceptional print or broadcast reporting and commentary on LGBT and civil rights issues. Presented in the past to *Bill Nemitz, Maine Public Radio, Maine Times and Tony Giampetruzzi.*
- **COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD**- for those who provide outstanding direct service to the community. Past recipients include *Paula Stockholm, Karen Geraghty, Laura Fortman, Jim Neal & Roger Mayo, Lin Gould, Northern Lambda Nord, Mary Harney, Rev. Fred Lipp, Mitzi Lichtman, Betsy Sweet, Deborah Shields and Michael Mayo.*
- **YOUTH IN LEADERSHIP AWARD**- for a youth leader (24 years of age or younger) in recognition of their contributions to the broader LGBT community. Presented to the *Gay/Straight Alliance of Mt. Desert High School and Ellen Stewert.*

Please feel free to copy and distribute this form as widely as possible.

You may request additional forms by contacting Rick Galena at (207) 761-3732 or email MLGPA@javanet.com.

THE DEADLINE FOR NOMINATIONS IS JANUARY 6, 2002

MLGPA 2002 Award Nomination Form

The award you want your nominee to receive: _____

Name, address, and phone number of person/organization you are nominating:

Why your nominee should receive this award (use separate paper if necessary)

Names and phone numbers of others who support or know the work of your nominee.

Has your nominee ever received an MLGPA award? _____ If so, when and which one?

Your name, address and phone number so that we can reach you with any questions.

The deadline for nominations is January 6, 2002 — Please do it today!	
MAIL TO : Maine Lesbian Gay Political Alliance	EMAIL: MLGPA@javanet.com
P.O. Box 1951, Portland ME 04104	FAX: 207-761-8484

We would like to thank the following sponsors for their generous donations to the MLGPA Foundation's

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Bangor Passes Civil Rights Ordinance

City Becomes 11th community in Maine to prohibit discrimination of gays and lesbians

As one of the final acts before the close of its term, the Bangor City Council on Monday, September 24 approved a local civil rights ordinance similar to one rejected last year by Maine voters.

The council, in an 8-1 vote, adopted the measure that prohibits discrimination in the city based on sexual orientation in the areas of employment, housing, education, credit and public accommodations. The vote came exactly one week after a three-hour long public hearing on the matter, which was heavily attended by civil rights supporters. MLGPA Executive Director, Rick Galena, was there to testify and helped organize local activists in

support of the ordinance. Michael Heath of the Christian Civic League and several local fundamentalist church leaders turned out in opposition.

"People feel a resistance to homosexuality, and they should," Heath said. "To us this is about forcing something on Maine culture that most folks have moral objection to."

"Equal rights and equal dignity are not special rights. They are basic American values," said Councilor Joe Baldacci, who with Councilor Judy Vardamis sponsored the ordinance.

Many in favor of the measure argued that protections were

necessary and long overdue in a city needing to send a message after the 1984 death of 23-year-old Charlie Howard, a Bangor man thrown off a downtown bridge by three local teenagers simply because he was gay.

"I find it troubling that a man had to die in Bangor...because of his sexual orientation," said an obviously disturbed Councilor Gerry Palmer. "There was no reason for that young man to die."

The citywide law is modeled closely on the state law, which does not apply to sexual orientation, but prohibits discrimination based on age, disability, gender, race or religion.

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Former MLGPA President Elected Portland Mayor

Two-term lesbian City Councilor Karen Geraghty elevated to city's top spot

BY TONY GIAMPETRUZZI

Maine's largest city now has an out lesbian mayor. Karen Geraghty, one of Maine's best-known openly gay politicians, was elected last week by fellow Portland city councilors.

Geraghty, a two-term councilor, has been active in Maine gay and lesbian politics for years, but she has also been a formidable player in Portland, politics taking on such issues as homelessness and controversial waterfront planning. In Portland, the position of mayor—which is elected from within the city council, not by popular vote—is more of a ceremonial position than in other cities, with much of the actual decision-making authority going to the city manager.

Nonetheless, the appointment is significant—no other city in Maine has ever been headed by someone who is openly gay. Geraghty, who is the former president of the Maine Lesbian Gay Political Alliance and a lobbyist

for a number of organizations, says that her sexual orientation is mentioned when her work is reported in mainstream press, but that the coverage is always positive.

"The good news is that I am glad to be gay, and being a sexual minority has shaped my world view—forced me to learn how to advocate for myself and others." Since being elected to the Portland city council, Geraghty has affected policy not only for all Portland residents, but also for the city's gays and lesbians.

In 1999, Geraghty was instrumental in instituting domestic partnership benefits for city employees and, last summer, Geraghty successfully advocated for a domestic partnership registry aimed at further legitimizing gay and lesbian committed relationships.

In addition to heading MLGPA, Geraghty was also heavily involved in Maine Won't Discriminate, an

organization that was formed to oppose the 1995 ballot measure that would have barred Maine legislators from passing a gay and lesbian civil rights law. While MWD was successful in the 1995 effort, the same group came up short in 1998 when it led the opposition in an attempt to overturn a gay civil rights law that was passed by the Legislature in 1997. Nonetheless, OUT magazine recognized Geraghty as one of its Out 100 in 1998.

In a congratulatory letter addressed to Geraghty, Executive Director Rick Galena and current MLGPA President Maggie Allen wrote, "As Maine's largest and most progressive community, Portland has continuously set a high standard...for tolerance, support and nurturing of human diversity. We at MLGPA know that your leadership will only strengthen these values and improve the lives of our community."

Maine Education leader targets harassment of gay students

BY TONY GIAMPETRUZZI

Late last month, the Maine Commissioner of Education sent a letter to all Maine school superintendents, principals and administrators clarifying that laws already on the books are meant to create a safe environment for all students, including LGBTQ youth, at Maine public schools. The letter trumped a so-called "sue the schools" bill that, if introduced and passed, would have only made it easier for students who face discrimination to bring a civil suit against his or her school. Maggie Allen, President of the Maine Lesbian Gay Political Alliance, says that the letter appropriately seeks to insure that all students in Maine are afforded an equal opportunity in education and a safe place to learn and grow.

"Maine has earned good marks for its efforts to make schools safe for youth over the past several years. But unfortunately, many schools still fail to recognize LGBT youth as a vulnerable segment of the student population. This inattention only compounds the fear and risk for many gay youth, or youth questioning their sexuality. The Commissioner's letter is an important first step in drawing attention to the very real problems in our schools and the need for policies to focus resources on making them safe for all students."

Nearly five years ago, MLGPA joined with the Portland-based LGBT youth group, Outright, the Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network (GLSEN), Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), the Maine Speakout Project, and other youth advocates to form a group known as the Safer Schools Coalition. The SSC explores ways to ensure that every student in Maine has safe and equal

Legislator seeks commission to study anti-gay violence and harassment in schools

State Representative Ben Dudley (D-Portland) hopes that when the Legislature reconvenes in January that one of its first orders of business will be making Maine schools safer for LGBT youth. The proposal, which was created with input from MLGPA and members of the Safe Schools Coalition, would establish a commission to study the problem of violence and harassment in Maine schools, with a particular focus on the plight of LGBT youth. The commission would also be charged with drafting recommendations for making schools safer, more tolerant places for all youth.

Data published by the Maine Children's Alliance in 2000 showed that 55 percent of LGBT youth reported being verbally assaulted at school and 28 percent physically threatened. The same study also found that 52% of queer youth in Maine reported seriously considering attempting suicide in the last 12 months.

access to education. This year, the group has been working on policy recommendations for prevention bias-motivated harassment and violence in Maine schools. Rather than seek new legislation, the SCC has agreed to support and closely monitor existing programs like the civil right teams and the Attorney General's hate crimes unit. It was from these discussions and meetings with local legislators that the idea of a letter from the Commissioner of Education to all schools was generated.

The letter, sent by Commissioner

Duke Albanese, mandates that schools establish strong anti-harassment policies that set-up "expectations for responsible behavior" and that schools strictly enforce them.

"How to define and demonstrate respect is the work of each community and each school board, but fundamental to the notion of respect is tolerance and avoidance of any harassing behavior, such as derogatory statements about another person's gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion or disability that have the potential of causing physical or emotional harm," wrote Albanese.

The letter went on further to state that "...it is important to note that the local codes of conduct and the board policies required under the anti-hazing law are meant to protect all students. For some students, harassment worsens as they get older. For example, according to data from the Maine Children's Alliance, gay, lesbian and bisexual youths experience pervasive victimization both verbally and physically."

Albanese made it clear that Maine's anti-hazing laws and laws requiring schools to establish codes of conduct are essential to insuring the safety of LGBTQ students. Allen points out that the letter also mentions gender-identification.

"Youth who are questioning their sexual identity or who are perceived as different because they do not conform to gender expectations in dress interest or behavior are likewise potential targets of harassment and thus run the risk of being denied the opportunities to learn that must be afforded to all students in public schools."

Allen is pleased with the support of the Department of Education, explaining that leadership from the state level often motivates change at the local level in making safe schools for LGBTQ youth.

New MLGPA Board *(continued from page 1)*

Action Officer, Personnel Director at the Maine State Prison, and founding member of the Maine Chapter of the Coalition of Labor Union Women. She likes to say she has negotiated every contract between the Maine State Employees Association and the State of Maine since MSEA's inception – on one side or the other.

Marti M. Hagglund R.N.,C is presently our transgender advocate consultant. She is an active member of MEGRESS (Maine Gender Resource and Support Service) which provides educational information and consulting for Maine's Transgender and Intersex communities, support for professional educators, businesses, and the public, and Trans-care to Maine's pre and post op Transsexual communities.

R. Scott Hawkins (Treasurer) has an MBA in nonprofit management, with special emphasis on organizational structure and theory, and a BA in Dispute Mediation. He has worked for 13 years in nonprofit management for groups involved with environmental issues, housing for homeless, community empowerment and organizing, inner city economic development, and children's issues. He has been a Board Member/Chair of the Lesbian Gay Caucus of Minnesota Democratic Farmer Labor Party (DFL); member of the Central Committee of Democratic Farmer Labor Party; Accountant for gubernatorial campaign; Member of Twin Cities Gay Pride; and founder of its Fundraising Committee, Steering committee, Its Time Minnesota (passage of anti-discrimination bill). He served on the campaign committees for state house, state senate, party chair, and DNC members.

Robin Lambert (Vice President) was a member of the original MLGPA Board of Directors (1984-

1990) and has been a Board member for the last two years. He has been Chair of the AIDS Advisory Committee and is presently on the Board of Directors of Peabody House. Robin feels that "it has been very empowering to me to have served in leadership positions on numerous Republican campaigns, where I have been able to make sure that our community is reflected positively."

Jane Lincoln recently completed the Senior Executives in State and Local Government Program at Harvard University. She has worked in state government for 23 years and is currently Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Transportation. Jane most recently served on the Board of Directors of and held the office of Treasurer for the Maine Women's Lobby.

P. J. Mears has previously held a board seat for 3 years from 1996-99. During this time he began his transition from female to male. He currently is the Director of Transgender Advocacy - providing education, advocacy and support for the Transgender/ Transsexual community in Maine. He is also an adult advisor for Lewiston Auburn Outright, a glbtq youth group

Dottie Melanson, from Falmouth, lives with her husband of 20 years and 3 glorious teenage daughters. She is a graduate of Westbrook College and is employed at Maine Medical Center as an RN in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. Dottie currently is the chair of the Cumberland County Democratic Committee and is Maine's Democratic National Woman. She has actively assisted many candidates with local, state and national campaigns. Dottie also serves on the board of directors of Maine Citizens Against Handgun Violence and the Death With Dignity Center.

Rodney Mondor has a BS in Organizational Behavior. Looking for a new experience, he attended the University of South Carolina for is Masters in Education. After working at Miami University ('91-94), Rodney decided to move closer to his family and returned to Maine. Since his return, Rodney worked for the United Way of Greater Portland ('94-97) and The AIDS Project as the Client Services Coordinator. At present he is the Assistant Director for Student Involvement at the University of Southern Maine. Other activities include: United Way Communications Committee, Maine Medical Volunteer, Coordinator of Portland Thanksgiving and bike rider for the Montreal to US AIDS Vaccine Ride.

Thomas Moody is a graduate of Westbrook College, Portland, Maine and The Hartt School of Music at The University of Hartford, Hartford, Connecticut. He currently works as a Medical Technologist at Miles Memorial Hospital in Damariscotta, Maine. He has been an active campaign volunteer for several local State House and Senate candidates. He has served on the Fund Raising Committee of The Lincoln County Democrats and currently acts as The Democratic Party's Town Chair of Nobleboro. He was a volunteer for "Maine Won't Discriminate."

Virginia Slawson is the current newsletter designer. She has been a studio artist in glass and mixed media since 1975, taught workshops in glass blowing and stained glass since 1981, and is a co-owner of World Wide Web Design.com. She MWD campaigns, and the Signature Challenge. She presently is a member of Mid Coast for Human Rights (MCHR), Bi-Net USA, Bi in Northern New England, Maine Bisexual People's Network, and

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MLGPA urges Ashcroft to support LGBT victims of Sept. 11 tragedy

Letter to AG and Maine's Congressional Delegation urges compensation for partners/children of LGBT victims

In response to the tragic events of September 11th, the federal government created the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund of 2001. The purpose of the fund is set forth clearly in the enabling legislation: *to provide compensation for the losses of relatives of those who died, and those who were injured.* U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft has been charged with the responsibility of issuing regulations to implement the fund. Some national advocacy groups, including the Human Rights Campaign and Lambda Legal Defense and Education

Fund, have called on LGBT citizens from across the country to weigh in with the Attorney General and to insist that any definition or eligibility criteria not be limited to blood or marriage, but include families formed around same-sex couples.

In response to HRC and Lambda's call to action, the MLGPA Board of Directors sent letters to Attorney General Ashcroft and to each member of Maine's congressional delegation urging them to "ensure that all family members who lost the support of a loved one are entitled to full and fair compensation for

their losses, without regard to the sexual orientation of the victim of this tragedy."

The letter went on to say, "For those victims whose family relationships do not meet certain strict formal legal definitions, such as same-sex partners and non-biological children of victims, the enormity of the loss of a beloved companion and parent could be compounded by the prospect of ineligibility for compensation intended for their protection. The Department of Justice should not permit this potential inequity."

New MLGPA Board (continued from page 5)

Biversity Boston.

Susan Sparaco (Secretary) has been on the board for five years and serves as secretary and a member of the Executive Committee. For the past twelve years, Susan has been an Assistant Attorney General and is part of the team providing Civil Rights Training to Maine schools. The work that she enjoys most though, is that of chair of our Scholarship Committee.

Mark Sullivan, is chair of our Communications Committee. He has also served on the Boards of Directors of the Natural Resources Council of Maine and the Maine Association of Conservation Commissions. He was formerly the Deputy Commissioner of the Maine Department of Conservation, Director of the Governor's Land and

Water Resources Council, and Executive Director of the Governor's Commission on Outdoor Recreation in Maine. He was a spokesperson for Maine Won't Discriminate in the 1995 campaign and is currently Communications Director for U.S. Representative Tom Allen.

Charles Veilleaux (aka Chuck) was born and educated in Jackman; graduated from Waterville High; served in the Air Force; and received a degree from UMO. He moved to Los Angeles - and became an "out of state!" - where he earned his JD from Loyola Law School. Chuck returned to Skowhegan in 1971, and opened a law office that continues today. Chuck has considerable political experience: elected and served one term as District Attorney; lobbied successfully for new "no

fault" divorce law in early 70s; and fostered important changes in Maine's Worker's Compensation Law.

Barb Wood came out as a political activist in 1984 by hosting MLGPA's first mailing party. As a founding member, she started our tradition of the annual awards banquet and the booth at the Common Ground Fair. MLGPA created the "Great Pioneer Award" when she was recognized for being the first openly gay or lesbian elected official in Maine. Barb served on the Portland City Council from 1988 through 1991. She was also a key spokesperson for Portland's anti-discrimination referendum. We're happy to have her back on the board.

MLGPA Sets 2002 Legislative Agenda

Lobbying efforts to focus on HIV/AIDS funding, sexuality education and safe schools

With the second session of the 120th Legislature set to begin in early January, MLGPA has outlined an ambitious agenda of legislative priorities. The focus of this agenda, says Executive Director Rick Galena, will continue to be the advancement of social and economic justice for Maine's LGBT community.

"As our community gains visibility and respect, our issues actually become much more complicated," says Galena. "Our community has a wide variety of needs and a complexity of issues facing us. People are looking for us to be more responsive to these needs and to have a more comprehensive approach to our public policy agenda. After the defeat of Question 6 last November, MLGPA has focused on promoting viable, sustainable and effective legislation that will immediately benefit the LGBT community, while moving us closer to our ultimate goal of full equality."

Much of the groundwork began this past year when MLGPA was instrumental in advocating for domestic partnership benefits for state employees, fending off an attempt to ban gays and lesbians

from adopting, and stopping a measure that would have repealed protected classes in the Maine Human Rights Act. MLGPA also worked with legislators to pass legislation that:

- Gives gay couples the same hospital visitation rights as heterosexuals
- Requires insurance companies to sell policies with domestic partnership benefits to all Maine companies that ask for them, and
- Funds a historic \$500,000 increase for civil rights teams in Maine schools.

This next session, MLGPA plans to focus on several key initiatives still pending before the Legislature.

HIV/AIDS FUNDING

LD 1023, An Act to Enhance the Quality and Accessibility of HIV Services and Prevention Services. This measure, if approved, would increase the amount of funding going to HIV prevention services by \$368,000 per year. The increase in funds, directed to the Department of Human Services and Bureau of Health, would be the first such increase in over a decade in Maine.

SAFER SCHOOLS

LD 1734, An Act to Promote Safe

Schools. This measure, if amended, would establish a commission to study the problem of violence and harassment in Maine schools, with a particular focus on the plight of LGBT youth. The commission would also be charged with drafting recommendations for making schools safer, more tolerant places for all youth.

FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

LD 1603, An Act to Promote Family Life Education in Maine Schools

This measure directs the Commissioner of Education to take action to enhance family life education for students in kindergarten to high school and appropriates \$750,000 for family life education. As part of these programs, students learn valuable information about human sexuality development along with disease prevention information, positive self-esteem building and many important life skills. These programs currently reach only 14% of Maine schools. If approved, LD 1603 would provide funding to expand family life education into 50 percent of schools.

Hampden Legislator Attempts Block of DP Benefits-- Again

Measure comes as Christian Civic League ramps up efforts at new statewide referendum

With the Legislature set to reconvene in January, a Hampden legislator's attempt to repeal a new policy extending publicly funded health insurance benefits to unmarried domestic partners of state employees has once again been soundly defeated.

In October, State Representative Brian Duprey (R-Hampden)

submitted LR 3307, An Act to Eliminate Funding of Health Benefits for Domestic Partners, which would have effectively repealed the new health insurance policy for state employees. This latest attempt at a repeal of the policy comes just nine months after another failed attempt during the first session of the Legislature.

The new domestic partnership policy, which took effect July 1 of this year, was negotiated between the State Employee Health Commission and the Maine State Employees Association (MSEA) and had the support of Governor Angus King. The new policy extends health care insurance to the unmarried partners

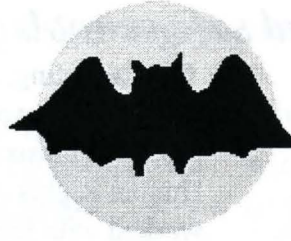
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Yes, There is a Great Pumpkin!

The fifth annual MLGPA Great Pumpkin Ball, held October 27th at the Eastland Park Hotel in Portland, was a great success despite the economy and mood of the nation. The decorations, lighting and program improve every year.

The highlight of the evening is the Great Pumpkin Parade. Hundreds of contestants parade by the celebrity judges hoping to be a winner. Once again, 98.9 The Point DJ Lori Voornas served as emcee. Our judges this year were: Cumberland County Sheriff Mark Dion and Maine State House Minority Leader Joseph Bruno (judging funniest category), WBLM-FM's Mark Persky and Barb Wood (scariest), State Representative Bill Norbert (best ensemble), State Representative Michael Quint and Portland Press Herald columnist Bill Nemitz (most original), and State Treasurer Dale McCormick and WPXT-TV's Jim Keithley (sexiest). Jim, were those *your* feet in the air dangling off the judges' podium? The winner of Best of the Ball was the nerd who "lost his cat."

If you didn't come to the ball, you'll have to ask some-



one who did to discover where his cat was after all.

The ball could not have happened without an army of volunteers, thousands of in kind contributions from businesses and professionals in the community, and the many attendees who came out and supported our event.

This year's prize donators were Amarylis, Barbara's Kitchen, Coffee by Design, Comfort Inn, Drop Me A Line, Epiphany, Harmon's & Barton's Flowers, Maine Ballroom Dance, Maine Mountainworks, Maine State Music Theater, Maple Hill Farm, Paint Design Unlimited, Paule French Studio, Terra Firma, Treasures of Maine, and Videoport. Special thanks to Harbor Masters for our vigilant security force and I Love Flowers for their wonderful bouquet. Please support our many friends who support our community.

(also see insert for special thanks to our sponsors)

Legislator Attempts to Block D.P. Benefits *(continued from page 7)*

of state employees under the same terms and conditions as currently offered to spouses. Maine is now the 8th state in the nation to offer such coverage to its workforce. Carl Leinonen, MSEA executive director, estimates the state's share of additional insurance costs under the enlarged plan at between \$150,000 and \$300,000 for about 100 people.

Last March, lawmakers voted 85-56 to kill a joint order sought by Rep. Duprey that would have barred the Legislature's Appropriations Committee from funding benefits to the homosexual and unmarried heterosexual partners of state employees until a public hearing could be held on the new policy.

The vote in March was lauded by Governor King, who issued a statement saying, "I support and stand with the 85 members of the House who voted today to allow the

new policy to stand. As in the private sector, state government needs to keep pace with the times to ensure that it is able to recruit and retain employees, and that includes insurance coverage for domestic partnerships. We're doing the right thing and, I should add, with minimal financial impact."

This time, Duprey's measure was put before the Legislative Council, which is responsible for preliminary screening of all bill requests and must vote by majority to allow a bill to be submitted for consideration by the full Legislature. The Senate President and President Pro Tempore, the Speaker of the House, majority and minority leaders of both the House and Senate and their assistant floor leaders form the 10-member Legislative Council. Since the Council unanimously rejected Representative Duprey's bill, the

new DP policy will stand.

The council's recent vote comes as setback for the Christian Civic League (CCL), which opposes any efforts to extend what it misleadingly labels "special rights" to same-sex couples. The CCL has called the new insurance policy "morally troubling". Michael Heath, CCL executive director, said it was "outrageous" for the state to adopt the plan's definition of a qualifying partner, which plan, includes anyone who has been in a continuous, co-habiting relationship for at least one year and shares financially binding connections such as joint home ownership or checking accounts. Heath has said that the recent votes against Rep. Duprey's efforts have not ended the issue as far as he is concerned.

"We'll see what happens next," he said. "We're just getting started."

MLGPA, AIDS Activists call on State for more HIV/aids funds

PWA's criticize state for neglect of prevention services and lack of medications

On October 24, approximately 85 AIDS activists and supporters gathered, in the rain, on the steps of the State House in Augusta, to protest what they call Maine's neglect of the people living with AIDS and the continued spread of HIV.

Clients and staff of the Eastern Maine AIDS Network (EMAN) organized the daylong rally that included speakers and entertainment. EMAN Executive Director Denis Cranson said that the impetus for the rally was the growing frustration and anger over the fact that state has ignored its obligation to fight the AIDS epidemic in a responsible and concerted way.

"Maine has not met its commitment to people living with AIDS, and it has not done enough to prevent the spread of this disease," said Cranson. We hoped that we would stimulate other people throughout Maine to act—to be more proactive, especially as both these issues come to a deadline for action."

One of EMAN's priorities is a long-awaited waiver for AIDS medication through the State's Medicaid program. The Medicaid waiver, which has been promised by the Department of Health and Human Services for years, is meant to provide a cost-neutral way for the State to increase the accessibility of AIDS medications for people living with the disease. The waiver, if implemented, would make AIDS medications available to clients with incomes up to 300 percent of Medicaid eligibility and before they become too sick to work or take care of themselves.

Another focus for AIDS activists is a much-needed influx of monies to fund a variety of HIV prevention initiatives throughout Maine. This



Over 80 MLGPA members and other activists rallied for more AIDS funding at the State House in Augusta on October 24.

past legislative session, MLGPA, along with the Maine AIDS Alliance and a handful of AIDS service providers, lobbied in support of LD 1023, An Act to Enhance the Quality and Accessibility of HIV Services and Prevention Services.

The measure would provide approximately \$368,000 more per year to the Bureau of Health, HIV/STD Program. While this increase would be the first and most significant increase in over a decade, critics claim it really only makes up for the cost of living increases that the State has failed to provide since 1989.

"If you factor in an average 3 percent inflation per year since 1989, the state has actually experienced a 40 percent reduction in HIV prevention funding over the last decade," says Cranson. "This despite the fact that our client caseload has increased by over 300 percent in that same time period—and that doesn't even take into consideration the children and family members of clients."

While MLGPA and its coalition partners succeeded in getting the bill through both chambers of the

Legislature, it has languished on the appropriations table waiting for the funding to be allocated and still has yet to make it to the Governor's desk for approval.

MLGPA Executive Director Rick Galena said that even if the money comes and the waiver passes, it is too little, too late.

"It has taken us ten years to get to this point," says Galena. "These are the two biggest initiatives to come along since the beginning of the AIDS epidemic. The money we are seeking is just a drop in the bucket, but makes up for the loss of money the AIDS community has suffered over the past decade."

Since 1989, the State has invested approximately \$184,449 in HIV prevention services and \$186,000 in case management services for people living with HIV/AIDS. While treatment services have seen very small increases over the years, the amount of money being spent on prevention has remained stagnant. In the meantime, the rate of new HIV infections has continued, particularly among women and children and among Maine's rural communities.

Accepting Nominations for MLPGA Awards

Every year the Maine Lesbian Gay Political Alliance, in partnership with its educational organization, the MLGPA Foundation, holds a gala awards banquet to celebrate individuals and organizations that have made significant contributions to social justice and equal rights for Maine's LGBT community.

This year marks MLGPA's 18th annual awards banquet. The banquet will be held Saturday, March 30th at the Holiday Inn by the Bay in

Portland with festivities beginning at 6 p.m. and the awards ceremony at 8 p.m.

By tradition, all award recipients are selected through a community nomination process. The process is open to any person or group wishing to make a contribution. Nominations for the various awards are encouraged and are being accepted now. The deadline for nominations is January 6, 2002. Please use the form included with this newsletter or

contact the MLGPA office at (207) 761-3732 or email us at MLGPA@javanet.com.

MLGPA is interested in learning about and supporting the diverse and exceptional work that many individuals and organizations do on behalf of our community. We hope that you will take this opportunity to nominate any individual or organization you feel deserves public recognition for their work, their ideas and their accomplishments.

Bangor Passes Civil Rights Ordinance (continued from page 3)

And most recently, city residents voted 7,278 to 6,644 in favor of last November's Question 6, which would have included sexual orientation in the Maine Human Rights Act.

Other communities that have enacted civil rights legislation include Bar Harbor, Brooksville, Sorrento, South Portland, Castine, Orono, Long Island, Waterville, Falmouth, and

Portland. Brunswick also has an anti-discrimination ordinance, but it only applies to city agencies.

"We stand united with the people of Bangor in our gratitude to the City Council for taking this important, yet long-overdue, step in creating a society where all citizens can be treated equally and enjoy the same basic rights as everyone else." said

Rick Galena, Executive Director of MLGPA in response to the Council's action. "The people of Bangor have distinguished themselves as leaders in the fight for civil rights--we expect that many more communities will follow." *For more information on passing a local civil rights ordinance in your community, contact MLGPA at 800-55-MLGPA.*



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