Community Pride Reporter, 05/1998

Community Pride Reporter

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Maine Is Gearing Up For A Summer Of Pride
By Victoria Brett

Portland, Maine (AP) University of Maine sophomore Casey Belanger sat down at the computer in his dorm room and typed a nasty, threatening message to a fellow student he had never met.

Using a slur for homosexuals, he wrote that if he saw the student, "I'm gonna shoot you in the back of the (expletive) head." Inadvertently, he sent the message onto campus computer bulletin boards, including one run by a gay-lesbian group.

A week later, the state attorney general slapped the 19-year-old with a hate crime lawsuit, accusing him of violating the civil rights of homosexuals.

"I don't even know the guy," Belanger said in a telephone interview from the campus in Orono. "I was just mouthing off."

On the Internet and via e-mail, threats and offensive jokes fly through cyberspace between anonymous users, often without repercussions.

But when such expressions appear on college and university computer networks, they can trigger complaints or even criminal investigations. They can also set off a debate pitting First Amendment rights against campus administrators' authority and responsibilities.

"Mouthing off is considered libel and slander," said Peter Burke, an attorney in the corporate technology practice group at Powell, Goldstein, Frazer & Murphy, an Atlanta and Washington law firm. "By operating e-mail systems, does the university become responsible for what gets posted there?"

In some cases, Burke said, universities and colleges are walking the tightrope between censorship and free speech.

"Some universities are overreacting. They're treating electronic mail differently than they would treat communications using a pen and paper," said Barry Steinhardt, president of the Electronic Frontier Foundation, a San Francisco-based online civil liberties organization.

Steinhardt said colleges don't appear to care where students send their mail via the U.S. Postal Service, but with e-mail and the Internet there is a trail they can follow.

The University of Maine case is one of many:

At Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y., four freshmen sent a derogatory joke about women to their friends through e-mail. The message was sent in 1995 to 20 of the students' friends, who then passed it along to countless Internet e-mail addresses, with e-mail and the Internet there is a trail they can follow.

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- At the University of North Carolina, officials closed an e-mail account belonging to a former student after a racist message from that account was posted on at least 10 Internet news groups. Anyone reading the joke about why "all niggers should go back to Africa" could see that it originated at the university.
- At Virginia Tech, a student was punished for posting a New World Wide Web page of a gay organization that suggested gay men be cas­trated and killed.
- At Bates College in Lewiston, Maine, a student used the computer net­work to type an obscenity-laced mes­sage saying she hated white people. Bates officials called the message "off­sensive and divisive." The college's Hate Crimes and Bias Committee said the incident alerted it to other student postings.

But public universities cannot legally punish students for what they say on the campus computer network, Steinhardt said, unless the mail consti­tutes a violation of the law, like the Belanger case.

That incident started when Belanger stated on his resume a student bulletin board that he "disliked fags." That prompted a barrage of anonymous e-mail, he said.

He sent the threatening message to the person he thought was sending the anonymous messages. But his message ended up going to 10 other students as well as the Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual public conference folder and three other computer folders.

Soon after, students alerted campus police, who then forwarded the matter to police and the state attorney general's office.

"It all just got blown out of propor­tion," Belanger said.

The university ordered him to serve 30 hours of community service and suspended his computer account. The state waived a $5,000 fine when Belanger signed an agreement promising not to harass or threaten others.

Belanger said he would never have said in-person what he wrote while hidden behind his screen name.

"It was just a spur of the moment thing," he said. "Given the opportunity, I would definitely go back and reword it."

Maine Attorney General Andrew Ken­tetter said there's an easy way to know when speech is inappropriate and possibly illegal: People should not be scared by a message they receive through their computer.

"I think that people may say, 'Hey, I got a First Amendment right to say whatever I want,"' Ketetter said. But he added: "It does not include the right to threaten."

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Two Webster Men Lur And Beat Cambridge Man

Worcester, Mass. (AP) One of two Webster men accused of beating a Cambridge man after luring him to their town using an Internet chat room for gays has been charged with smuggling LSD into the jail where they await trial.

William D. Peters, 21, scheduled to be arraigned May 7, was further charged this week with conspiracy to violate the controlled substances law, according to the Telegram & Gazette of Worcester.

According to court documents, Peters and labbe, awaiting trial for armed robbery, assault and battery with a shod foot, a civil rights violation into a November fund-raiser held by a group opposing same-sex marriage.

The commission Tuesday voted to formally investigate the new complaints that campaign spending laws were violated in connection with the event. The complaints were filed by gay ac­tivist William Wood.

Save Traditional Marriage '98, a political action group, net­ted about $900,000 dollars from the fund raiser.

The集中在 current week's election, when voters will be asked to vote on a constitu­tionnal amendment that would limit marriage to one man and one woman.

Last month, the commission issued a ruling that Australian Consultant Colin McDonald improperly made a $200 contribution to the fund raiser. McDonald, who made the donation without knowing it was a political event, is barred from contributing under state law because he is a foreign national.

Woods has since raised more complaints about the fund raiser.

Commission attorney Brian Nakamura said the commission re­ceived a number of calls from people who attended the event and who did not know it was a fund raiser. He said it may be that some of the money involved was used under false pretenses, which would be a major violation if proven.
Canada’s High Court Back Gays In Landmark Ruling

By David Crary

Toronto, (AP) In a landmark gay-rights case, Canada’s Supreme Court ruled Thursday that Alberta’s human rights code must offer specific protection to homosexuals.

The ruling was a triumph for Delwin Vriend, 32, who was fired as a lab instructor by a Christian college in Edmonton in 1991 because he was gay, then told by Alberta’s Human Rights Commission that he had no grounds for a complaint.

Alberta is one of three Canadian provinces that have not included homosexuals in their human rights codes. The others, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland, have pledged to make the change.

The Alberta government’s lawyers argued before the Supreme Court in November that it should be up to elected officials, not the courts, to decide whether special protection for homosexuals should be included in the human rights code.

The high court rejected this argument and said Alberta should immediately amend its code to cover sexual orientation.

Excluding homosexuals from the code “sends a message to all Albertans that it is permissible, and perhaps even acceptable, to discriminate against individuals on the basis of their sexual orientation,” the high court said.

At a news conference in Edmonton, Vriend said he was delighted by the ruling and criticized officials in the western province.

“Albertans that it is permissible, and perhaps even acceptable, to discriminate against individuals on the basis of their sexual orientation,” the high court said.

The Supreme Court had ruled in a separate 1995 case that Canada’s Charter of Rights prohibits discrimination against homosexuals even though it doesn’t specifically state that.

The high court said sexual orientation is a “deeply personal characteristic” that can’t be changed and is a ground for discrimination just like religion, race and gender.

Alberta’s lawyers argued that provincial human rights codes which cover such matters as employment and housing shouldn’t have to mirror the Charter of Rights.

When Vriend was fired in 1991, only his parents and closest friends knew he was gay. But he said he had no regrets about launching a legal battle that thrust him into the public spotlight.

“Suddenly, my name and face were being blasted all over. It was like, ‘Oh boy, I’m out now,’” Vriend said in February.

He now works in the University of Alberta library system. The high court ruling does not mean he automatically can get his old job back it does mean the provincial human rights commission would be obligated to consider his complaint.

Big-Busted Women Find Support In Portland

By Victoria Brett

Portland, Maine (AP) Magda Adrien wears a tight purple shirt proudly displaying her large 38DD breasts. But she was not always so proud, or so comfortable.

She once considered breast-reduction surgery because traditional bras amounted to torture, the thin straps digging into her shoulders, her breasts spilling out over the cups.

“I didn’t understand,” she said.

“If we can send a man to the moon, then why can’t I find a bra?”

Adrien never found a bra that fit right, so she started making her own three years ago. And it has turned into a profitable business that serves a market estimated by bra maker Playtex to be worth $4 billion, but Adrien hopes to boost that to 4,000 bras a month when she completes a TV infomercial.

The She-Bra, which is made with underwire, cushioned shoulder straps, and a silky supportive material, comes in solid colors or a sexy cheetah print. The bras, which sell for $89.95 for three, plus shipping, are stitched together by workers at the Maine Center for the Blind.

Adrien, a graduate of New York’s Fashion Institute of Technology, plans to eventually make bathing suits and lingerie, and she is driven by the desire to help other women and girls with big breasts. She wants women and girls to be comfortable in their bras and in their bodies.

“It’s not an easy task, she said, in a society that says the ideal woman is a size 8 and really big breasts are the butt of jokes.

“I really want to provide information first for young women, share my story, let them know that they’re not freaks, they’re not abnormal, they’re OK and it’s going to get better,” she said.

Adrien appears on radio and television talk shows, calling herself “America’s Big Breast Expert.”

That’s a tiny piece of the overall industry estimated by bra maker Playtex to be worth $4 billion, but Adrien hopes to boost that to 4,000 bras a month when she completes a TV infomercial.

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By Esther Rothblum

In the early 1980s, lots of lesbians were beginning to figure out ways to have children by donor insemination. Nanette Gartrell, a lesbian psychiatrist, was interested in studying these pioneer lesbians. "We had no money," she said in a recent interview, "but of course none of the work I've ever done has been funded. It's usually too controversial to be funded by any of the traditional sources, such as the National Institutes of Health.

It's years ahead of its time in terms of when such agencies would fund this kind of research. We decided if we waited for funding agencies to get over their hesitance, we'd be waiting another decade. So we went ahead and funded it ourselves.

Nanette's study is now the longest-running study of lesbians who had children via donor insemination. "It's already well-documented that kids of lesbian mothers are healthy," Nanette told me, "so we're not trying to re-establish that. What we're interested in is how they have coped with homophobia."

Nanette's research team advertised in bookstores and gay and lesbian newspapers. They made up flyers to distribute at lesbian films and community events. They went to all the workshops on choosing children and told participants about the study.

The original study began with 154 mothers. The first interviews took place when the mothers were pregnant. Then the mothers and co-mothers were interviewed again when the children were a year and a half old and when they were five. Nanette's team is currently interviewing the families now that the children are 10, and this for the first time includes interviews with the children themselves.

Then the families will be interviewed next when the children are 17 and when they are 25. "When we interviewed the mothers at first, when they were pregnant, they anticipated being out as lesbians," said Nanette. "For the most part they used unknown donors, because there was a lot more fear at that time that somehow the state would come in and take the children away.

By the time of the next interviews, when the children were toddlers, many of them regretted this and wished they had used a known donor who could have participated in the child's life as a father. Lesbians that we interviewed even a few years later had begun to use known donors.

We actually stopped inviting new participants in 1992 because the 'old' lesbians differed so much from the 'new' ones in terms of donor identity.

Not surprisingly, the children were very much desired. When the lesbians were interviewed while pregnant, about half the women were in stable relationships, and had been with their partners from a few months to a decade or more. Others were single mothers.

When Nanette's team re-interviewed the mothers when the children were a year and a half, they were not in contact. They had completely disconnected from their mothers who had very little time for their own lives other than childrearing and paid employment.

"The process of giving birth was the little contact with their partners, and this was often a source of tension. By the time of the interviews when the children were five, a number of the couples had broken up. Those couples where the mothers had spent time away from the children, in order to have more time with each other, were more likely to still be together than the couples that had been most child-focused.

Nanette's team is interviewing the ten-year old children. "It's very exciting to be interviewing the kids for the first time," said Nanette. "Because we have these very articulate kids who are highly educated around issues of diversity, racism, and homophobia."

Doing longitudinal research is not easy. When Nanette had a flood in her basement a few years ago, some of the file cabinets got wet. "I was frantically using a hair dryer to dry the pages of the interviews so the data wouldn't be lost," she recalls. Nanette phones all the families each year to see if they have moved, so she won't lose touch with them.

A couple of women who once identified as lesbians are now involved with men; a few women have died. But Nanette has stayed in touch with just about all the women from the original sample.

As couples break up and then get involved with new partners, Nanette incorporates all these "step-moms" in the study. "This means we may be the only study that has more participants at the end of the study than at the beginning!" she said.

More information about the study results can be read in: Nanette Gartrell et al. (1996), The National Lesbian Family Study: Interviews With Prospective Mothers, American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, volume 66, number 2, pp. 272-281.

Esther Rothblum is Professor of Psychology at the University of Vermont and Editor of the Journal of Lesbian Studies.

DYKE PSYCHE is a monthly column. Community Pride reporter is happy to welcome Ms. Rothblum aboard! copyright Esther Rothblum

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**Canada's High Court Backs Gays In Landmark Ruling**

By David Crary

Toronto (AP) In a landmark gay rights case, Canada's Supreme Court ruled Thursday that Alberta's human rights code must offer specific protection to homosexuals from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

The ruling was a triumph for Delwin Vriend, 32, who was fired as a lab instructor by a Christian college in Edmonton in 1991 because he was gay, then told by Alberta's Human Rights Commission that he had no grounds for a complaint.

Alberta is one of three Canadian provinces that have not included homosexuals in their human rights codes. The others, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland, have pledged to make the change.

The Alberta government's lawyers argued before the Supreme Court in November that it should be up to religious officials, not the courts, to decide whether special protection for homosexuals should be included in the human rights code. The high court rejected that argument and said Alberta should immediately amend its code to cover sexual orientation.

Excluding homosexuals from the code "sends a message to all Albertans that it is permissible, and perhaps even acceptable, to discriminate against individuals on the basis of their sexual orientation," the high court said.

At a news conference in Edmonton, Vriend said he was delighted by the ruling and criticized officials in the western province.

"It's extremely shameful that the government kicked and screamed and that for the past seven years, all the way to the Supreme Court," he said. "Alberta has developed a reputation as Canada's most conservative province. Its premier, Ralph Klein, said Thursday evening the province would obey the high court ruling, at least for now, and he indicated a Cabinet task force would examine whether the decision would lead to demands for the province to recognize same-sex partnerships and marriages.

More than a dozen groups intervened in the case, including ones that saw the case as a test of religious freedom the right of King's University College to hire according to its beliefs. The Supreme Court had ruled in a separate 1995 case that Canada's Charter of Rights prohibits discrimination against homosexuals even though it doesn't specifically state it.

The high court said sexual orientation is a "deeply personal characteristic" that can't be changed and is a ground for discrimination just like religion, race and gender.

Alberta's lawyers argued that provincial human rights codes which cover such matters as religion "belong in the arena that shouldn't have to mirror the Charter of Rights.

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He now works in the University of Alberta library system. The high court ruling does not mean he automatically can get his old job back but he does mean the provincial human rights commission must be obligated to consider his complaint.
Community Pride Resources

Support Groups

Maine AIDS Alliance

Men's Support Group: Meets every 2nd Wednesday at 3:30 pm at the American Legion Post 64, 736 U.S. Route 1, South Portland, ME 04106. For more information, call 207-874-1095.

Women's Support Group: Meets every 1st Monday at 5:30 pm at the American Legion Post 64, 736 U.S. Route 1, South Portland, ME 04106. For more information, call 207-874-1095.

Children's Support Group: Meets every 3rd Wednesday at 5:00 pm at the American Legion Post 64, 736 U.S. Route 1, South Portland, ME 04106. For more information, call 207-874-1095.

Mental Health Support Group: Meets every 2nd Monday at 6:00 pm at the American Legion Post 64, 736 U.S. Route 1, South Portland, ME 04106. For more information, call 207-874-1095.

Young Adults Support Group: Meets every 4th Monday at 7:00 pm at the American Legion Post 64, 736 U.S. Route 1, South Portland, ME 04106. For more information, call 207-874-1095.

Teen Support Group: Meets every 3rd Wednesday at 6:00 pm at the American Legion Post 64, 736 U.S. Route 1, South Portland, ME 04106. For more information, call 207-874-1095.

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Phone Support By Region

OUTRIGHT
Bangor: OUTright Too: Supportive, informative and social meetings for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and questioning youth age 22 and under. Safe place for questions, growth, and fun. Held twice monthly. FMI call 207-990-3626.

Central Maine: Weekly confidential meetings for gay, lesbian and questioning youth 22 years and under. First Call at 207-795-6677 OR 1-800-339-4042 and ask about OUTRIGHT.

 Lewiston/Auburn: Meets first and third Fridays. Confidential meetings for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender & questioning youth 22 years and under. Call 786-2717 for more information.

Portland: Meets every Fri., 7:30-9:30 pm and every Tuesday 6 pm to 9 pm at The Cinnamon Building, 1 Pleasant St., 4th floor. Portland. Safe and supportive discussions with and for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender & questioning young people. FMI call 288-6560, or 1-888-576-7600 or write to P.O. Box 5077, Portland, ME 04010.

Waldo-Knox: Meets every other Sunday in Camden for g/l/b or questioning youth 22 & under. Confidential, support-
Calender Items

There is an HIV/AIDS drop-in support group for those infected and affected by HIV every Thursday evening in Rockland from 6:15pm to 7:45pm. For more information on meetings, call Marjorie at the Coastal AIDS Network at 207-338-6330.

Social and support groups, education and counseling for gay/bi men at risk of HIV/AIDS. Video nights are held the 2nd Friday of each month at 7:00pm. There is a potluck and discussion group held on the 4th of each month. FMI call 207-338-6330.

The Visiting Nurses Association & Hospice (VNA) and the American Cancer Society will sponsor a series of seminars on Guidance in Grieving.

These seminars will be held on the second Monday of every month, at 7:30pm, at the Methodist Church, Elm Street, South Portland.

For more information, contact Julie Shackley at 207-780-6264; Grace Moulton RN at 207-799-3179; or Rev. Tom White or Erica at 945-5897.

Kool Kids Club - Activities for children affected by HIV/AIDS. Kool Kids Club meets every other week from 3:30pm - 5pm. For more information, call Chuck or Erica at 990-2095.

PFLAG - Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays meets one per month from 12:30pm - 1:30pm. For more information, or to volunteer, call Shawnta 1-800-429-1481; or write to Man 2 Man, PO Box 2038, Bangor, Maine 04402.

Women’s Support Group - for women living with HIV/AIDS. Meets the last Wednesday of the month from 10:45am - noon. For more information, call Latona at 990-3626.

Press Releases

Poetry Contest: You may enter a free poetry contest sponsored by the Berkeley Bards, one of America’s most prestigious poetry societies. The grand prize has been increased this year to $100.00 and everyone is invited to enter.

The guidelines are simple. Your poem must be 21 lines or less and may be written on any subject, using any style. To enter send one poem only: Free Poetry Contest, 1678 Shattuck Avenue, Suite 101, Berkeley, California 94709. Or enter on line at www.freecontent.com.

Says noted Poetry Director Dr. Ralph Kasper, “Maine has a great reputation for producing fine poets and we think that this contest will yield exciting results. As an incentive to beginning poets we reserve the right to publish all winning poems!”

Entry deadline for entering is May 26, 1998. Winners will be announced by the last week in October and a winners list will be sent to all entrants.

Maine Real Estate & Economic Development Association: Real Estate Spring conference on Thursday, May 21, 1998 at the Sheraton Tara Hotel, 363 Maine Mall Road, So. Portland between 1:15 and 4:30p.m. (Registration at 12:00pm)

The conference funded by Bell Atlantic. To register for the conference or for more information, please contact MEREDA at (207) 874-1939.

The registration fee is $50.00 per person for MEREDA members and $65.00 per person for non-members.

Safe Schools: a workshop for Walden, Lincoln, and Knox County teachers, counselors, and administrators, will be held Saturday, May 16 from 10a.m. to 2p.m. at Wades-Rockport School, Route 117, Knowlton Street, Camden. This event is being organized by Coastal Outright and the Coastal AIDS Network.

Coastal Outright is funded by the Maine Bureau of Health and the Coastal AIDS Network. For more information on Safe Schools or Coastal Outright services of The Oncology-Hematology Center at Mercy Hospital, call 207-973-1427.

Coastal Outright provides a booklet for information. Men's Resources.

Skin Care Seminar: Dr. Michael Taylor will discuss what's normal and what's not, when it comes to the skin we're in. This lecture will be held on Wednesday, May 6, 1998 at the Catherine McAuley High School Auditorium, 631 Stevens Avenue, Portland.

Coastal Outright is offering a grand prize for children ages 8-11 years. Children that attend the camp can expect the best times of their summer.

Teen Services: Teen services are offered here at the YMCA. We will be offering our special 2 week Summer Session. Call Aquatic Director, Matthew Engineri for information.

Take the plunge into summer camp with Aquatic Adventure Camp for kids ages 8-11 years. Children that attend this camp can expect the best times of their summer.

Stress and Anxiety Screening: The Coastal AIDS Network is offering a National Anxiety Disorders Screening Day. Free screenings will be held on that day at the following times and locations: 8am - 10am Interned, 259 Main Street, Yarmouth.

Music & Art

Women in Harmony: an a cappella choir ensemble open to all women regardless of age, race, religion, or sexual orientation. If you are interested in becoming a member, or volunteering organizational skills, send SASE (including your phone number) to P.O. Box 5306, Portland, ME 04101, or call (207) 774-4940.

Maine Men’s Chorus: a community chorus which brings men together through the medium of social togetherness. Based in the Coastal Maine area, as well as compatible with the San Francisco area. For more information, call the Greater Portland area, as well as the San Francisco area.

The Maine GayNet Mail List

The Maine GayNet Mail List serves your ideas and opinions with other list members. To subscribe to this list, send e-mail to majordomo@abacus.oxyc.edu. In the message part, write "subscribe gaynet".

The Maine GayNet Home Page

An ever-changing display of events and information. Meetings, contact people, resources, and information. Markup Browser to: http://www.qrd.org/www/usay mânilme.fime@paula.stockholm.paula@me.com.

San Francisco Gay/Lesbian Tourism Guide

An online merchant-sponsored Internet website geared to gay and lesbian travellers in the San Francisco area. It is compatible with most mainstream...
**Nightclubs Courting Gays And Lesbians**

Hartford, Conn. (AP) - Nightclubs trying to broaden their clientele have added a new theme night to their weekly lineups “alternative” night, catering to the gay and lesbian community.

David Squillante, owner of Velvet in downtown Hartford, says there was a time when sponsoring an alternative night would have been “the kiss of death.” Now, he says, it’s a good way to gain revenue.

Velvet turns into “Groove Box” on Wednesdays, offering dancing and entertainment aimed at the gay and lesbian crowd. Two weeks ago, Squillante added a second alternative night on Sundays.

“The gay people we see in here are successful, friendly, open-minded people who spend more and leave bigger tips than a straight crowd,” Squillante said.

Clubs such as The Bar With No Name and Webster Theater are also offering alternative nights to fill a void in business.

No Name draws a mixed crowd on Sundays with its live show that includes drag karaoke and “The Gay Dating Game.”

“Without a doubt, it is a wise, profitable business venture,” said Fran Delmastro, who recently purchased the downtown Hartford bar.

Delmastro said bar owners are being forced to look for new customers. “There are less people drinking now, given health, insurance and the law. It forces us to go after every market now to try to keep afloat,” he said.

Michael Begun, advertising and marketing manager for Metroline, a magazine aimed at Connecticut’s gay and lesbian community, said he is amazed at the interest in alternative nights.

“Bars that are straight most of the week see an opportunity to make money on slower nights, especially on Wednesdays and Sundays,” Begun said.

But some of the bars that have been dedicated to the gay and lesbian community are a bit worried about the new competition.

Dan Brewer, who manages The Sanctuary in Hartford and Avalon in East Windsor, both gay bars, says he has seen a decline in the city crowd as more alternative nights spring up. Brewer is scheduled to close The Sanctuary on April 19.

Bruce Lamothe, manager of the 25-year-old gay bar Chez Est, said he, too, has mixed feelings about the sudden interest in the gay and lesbian market.

“I’m aggravated that they are trying to capitalize on something they used to scorn,” Lamothe said. “It sim­ phons off business from those of us who have supported the community all along.”

But Michael Bell, a 29-year-old insurance agent who recently moved from New York, said the downtown bars offer a different atmosphere.

“I know there are a few other gay bars around here, but they attract an older crowd,” said Bell. “I’m young and at a different point of my life. I want this kind of ambiance; big city kind of stuff.”

**Stabbing Called A Bias Crime**

By Donna De La Cruz

New York, (AP) - Three teenagers came to Greenwich Village for a good time, police said. They ended up arrested after making anti-gay remarks to a group of people, sparking a confrontation that ended with the stabbing of a 22-year-old man.

Capt. Barbara Sicilia, commanding officer of the bias crime unit, said Wednesday’s incident was “bias-sparked” but has not been deemed a bias crime yet. She added that police do not believe the teens came into the area along the piers of the Hudson River to harass gays.

“In fact, they were here to visit the water, and to come to this area and have a good time,” Sicilia said.

The incident began when the teens, an 18-year-old male and two girls, ages 14 and 15 walked by a group of people near Christopher and Hudson streets at 1:15 a.m. Wednesday.

An anti-gay remark was made, just in passing we’re talking about juveniles the victim took offense to it, had some words,” Sicilia said.

One of the girls made the re­mark, but Sicilia would not disclose what was said.

The victim identified by The New York Times today as Colin Brown, 22 approached the teens. The male at­tempted to defend the girl who made the remark, and a fight started.

“There was an initial punch thrown by the perp, he missed the vic­tim, the victim returned the punch and then the knife came out,” Sicilia said, adding that the weapon was a hunting knife.

Sicilia defined a bias crime as an incident motivated by race, religion, ethnicity, disability or sexual orienta­tion.

“I don’t believe their intent was to have a bias attack,” Sicilia said. “I think these were juveniles who were saying things that they shouldn’t have been saying.”

Christine Quinn, executive di­rector of the New York City Gay and Lesbian Anti-Violence Project, asserted that the attack was a bias crime because of the attackers’ “perception” the man was gay. She also disputed the account the teens were just visiting the area.

“They came in a group … and they came with a weapon,” Quinn said. “They came on the subway, in their car, whatever, with a knife, and that’s very typically what we see in bias crimes, people will bring weapons from home.”

The victim was listed in serious but stable condition at St. Vincent’s Hospital and Medical Center. Sicilia said the victim was from New Jersey and was in the city with friends.

Police arrested the teens just a few blocks from where the incident occurred. Robert Cockrel, 18, of Queens, was charged with assault and weapon possession. The two girls, whose names were not released, were charged as ju­veniles with assault and weapon pos­session.

**Group Drops Gay Rights Proposal**

Brunswick, Maine (AP) - A group of Brunswick activists have abandoned their push for a municipal gay rights ordinance, and say they will now concentrate their efforts on the pas­sage of a statewide law.

“We were trying to think of what really would make gay and lesbian people feel more safe in their community, and an ordinance may not do it,” said Judy Lloyd, media co-ordinator for the local chapter of the National Orga­nization for Women and an organizer of the Brunswick coalition. “In fact, it may bring out the opposition.”

NOW was joined in the Brunswick group by representatives of the American Association of University Women, the League of Women Voters and several church groups.

The local effort started shortly after voters in February overturned a statewide gay rights law that the Leg­islature had just passed.

The activists said Tuesday they will begin to focus their efforts on pub­lic education and letter-writing cam­paigns.

“One thing is universally agreed upon, and that is that we need to do much more education, especially in the non-urban areas, about what the bill does and does not do,” said David Garrity, a board member of the Maine Lesbian-Gay Political Alliance.

“There’s a mistaken belief that we’re somehow protected in some other way, and we’re not,” he said.

Betsy Smith, president of the MLGPA, said a variety of local efforts could drain resources needed for a state­wide gay rights campaign. Local ordi­nances also face the same repeat efforts that brought down the state law.

Lewiston voters several years ago rejected a gay rights ordinance en­acted by city council.

Smith said activists should be gearing up for an organized grass-roots campaign, because the law eventually will be decided by voters, either in a referendum, or in an attempt to repeal a legislative act.

“This is going to end up at the polls,” Smith said. “The people will de­cide this issue.”
Coast-To-Coast NationsBank To Extend Health Coverage To Partners

Charlotte, N.C. (AP) The merger pairing NationsBank Corp. with San Francisco-based BankAmerica Corp. will extend domestic partner benefits to one of the biggest employers in the Bible Belt.

BankAmerica has offered health insurance to partners of gay workers since January 1997 under a policy that also covers other adult family members. NationsBank, with about 100,000 employees, will become one of the largest companies in North Carolina or South Carolina with such a policy.

Hugh McColl Jr., the NationsBank chief executive officer who will head the merged bank, said Wednesday that employees won’t lose any benefits they now have and NationsBank workers could gain unspecified ones from the merger.

When asked whether same-sex benefits would be extended to NationsBank employees, bank gave a succinct answer: “Yes.”

NationsBank and BankAmerica announced their $66.6 billion merger Monday, which would form the nation’s largest bank and the first to extend from coast to coast.

Domestic partner benefits may be one of the largest examples of the challenges faced in merging differing cultures at the two banks.

The new headquarters will be in Charlotte, the conservative city that has become the banking capital of the Southeast, in part because of NationsBank’s growth through mergers and acquisitions. BankAmerica’s hometown of San Francisco is considered one of the country’s most tolerant and one where gay and lesbian residents wield considerable political and economic power.

“It’s a historic merger, and the new corporation will offer these benefits,” said Shelly Schoenfeld, a NationsBank assistant vice president in Charlotte. “I appreciate Mr. (Hugh) McColl’s stance forward. I feel like I and a lot of other gay employees feel the same way. It’s a great victory for us.”

Details and timing of extending benefits are being worked out, spokeswoman Mary Waller said.

BankAmerica’s “extended family benefits” policy lets employees enroll in their health plan another qualifying adult in their household: a parent, a grandparent, a sibling, a same-sex or opposite-sex domestic partner.

“It’s a realization that the dependents our employees support might be parents, siblings or domestic partners,” said BankAmerica spokesman Dennis Wyss.

BankAmerica won’t say how many employees have signed up under the new policy. Its equal employment opportunity policy also protects gay employees from being fired, denied a promotion or harassed just because of their sexual orientation.

NationsBank, like nearly half of all Fortune 500 firms, doesn’t include homosexuality in its nondiscrimination policy. “That issue has not been addressed,” Waller said.

LGBTQ Group Says IRS Has Cheated It Of Tax-Exempt Status

By Paul Tolme

Providence, R.I. (AP) A group in South Kingstown that helps lesbians with cancer complained to the IRS on Tuesday, a day before the filing deadline, that it had unfairly been denied tax-exempt status.

The group was told by the Internal Revenue Service that it had to extend its service to all women, not just lesbians.

“What they are suggesting is that lesbians aren’t worthy enough,” said David Buckel, a lawyer for the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund Inc. in New York City.

Lambda sent a letter of complaint on Tuesday to the Internal Revenue Service on behalf of Kathy’s Group.

Buckel said plenty of other groups, including the American Association of Retired People and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, have been given tax-exempt status despite serving a segment of the population.

“As far as we’ve been able to determine, the IRS has no authority to require Kathy’s Group to alter its mission,” he said.

A spokesman for the IRS in Washington said he couldn’t comment because all matters except the awarding of tax-exempt status for nonprofits are confidential.

“Whether somebody applies for foundation grants that will go solely to tax-exempt status or something else,” said Ken Hubenak, “As far as we’ve been able to determine, the IRS has no authority to require Kathy’s Group to alter its mission.”

Kathy’s Group provides free counseling to lesbians, their partners and families. The group was founded in 1995 after one member of a lesbian couple both named Kathy became sick with breast cancer.

About 31 women have received the services of a therapist since the group’s inception.

Founder and director Lorry Garvin said the group applied for nonprofit status last year and was informed in February that it would have to broaden its mission.

Although the group pays no taxes now because its budget is tiny, the lack of nonprofit status prevents it from applying for foundation grants that go solely to tax-ex exempt organizations.

Student Goes Before Disciplinary Committee

Lewiston, Maine (AP) A Bates College student accused of raping one female student and sexually assaulting three others has decided to withdraw from the college, according to a school official.

The student had been scheduled to graduate in May. He will not be allowed to re-enroll at the school unless he participates in a class given by the dean to determine the veracity of the charges, said Patricia A. Lawson, a Bates spokeswoman.

Lawson declined to identify the student, but most of the school’s 1,600 students know who he is. The man left Lewiston on a bus last week after 300 students outraged over the allegations protested on the front lawn of college president David Wyss.

Another male student accused of sexually assaulting two students had his case heard in a closed hearing by the college’s conduct committee that began Friday and ended early Saturday.

The conduct committee, a panel of students and faculty, investigates allegations of disciplinary violations and decides whether to mete out punishment. It could decide to expel the student, but Lawson said the committee’s decision was not being made public.

A hearing for a third male student accused of raping a female student has been postponed for at least two weeks, Lawson said. That female student came forward last week during the turmoil on campus.

None of the female students who accused the three male students of rape and assault are pressuring criminal charges. College officials have declined to release details of the alleged assaults and rapes, saying they do not want to identify the alleged victims and suspects.

After last week’s protest, students suggested that some of the alleged assaults might have been prevented if college officials had notified students on campus.

As a result, Bates officials have decided to let students know about allegations of sexual assaults after alleged victims file charges with the dean’s office.

That notification process also will be extended to Lewiston police, Lawson said, in a decision made this week after Dean Celeste Branham and other college officials met with local authorities.

However, few details about the circumstances of each alleged incident will be released to the campus and to police officials believe there is a threat to other students. Bates officials believe doing so would make it too easy for alleged victims of sexual assaults or suspects to be identified.

Bates officials have agreed to provide more sensitivity training for members of the conduct committee. The school is also considering hiring a victims’ advocate.

There were no protests last week on the campus, where students were preparing for their final examinations next week.

“Students are harried and spending a lot of time in the library studying,” Lawson said.
Second annual festival of gay and lesbian performances will take place from May 14-24 at the downtown theatre facility.

Oak Street Theatre is pleased to announce their second annual festival of gay and lesbian performances, this year newly titled “Queer North!”, which will take place over two weekends from May 14-24, 1998 at Oak Street Theatre, 92 Oak Street in downtown Portland.

This year’s festival includes solo performances by nationally-known artists Susan Miller and Bruce Ward, as well as a special evening with the Maine Gay Men's Chorus and a production of "Brave Smiles ... Another Lesbian Tragedy," by the Five Lesbian Brothers, directed by Bates College Theatre professor Ellen Seeling and featuring local actors. Festival passes, valid for one entry to each performance, are on sale for only $35 at the theatre.

Individual show prices are $18 for Susan Miller’s show, showing Friday and Saturday, May 15 and 16, $15 for Bruce Ward’s show, showing Thursday and Friday, May 21 and 22, $15 for the Maine Gay Men’s Chorus, showing Saturday, May 23, and $7 for Brave Smiles, showing Thursday and Sunday, May 14 and 17, at 7:30 p.m., Wednesday and Sunday, May 20 and 24 at 7:30 p.m. and Saturday, May 23 at 10:30 p.m. ($5 for the late show.)

Susan Miller is an Obie-award winning performer whose show, “My Left Breast” premiered at the prestigious Humana Festival of New American Plays in 1994 and has been touring around the country ever since. Performance venues include Trinity Repertory Company, Walnut Street Theatre, and The Group Theatre in Seattle. Through a series of short vignettes, the performer details her successful struggle with breast cancer with humor and self-awareness. “We are thrilled and honored to have booked a performer of Susan Miller’s caliber,” said Producing Director Michael Levine, “Portland audiences are in for a real treat when they see her work.”

Bruce Ward is an actor, playwright and performer whose show “Decade: Life in the 80’s” traces the lives of ten gay men in the decade during which AIDS became a tragic reality of everyone’s lives. Bruce has performed nationally at theatres, festivals, and universities, and has met with widespread critical acclaim. Venues for the show have included the San Francisco Civic Auditorium; Boston Center for the Arts; Boston’s Institute of Contemporary Art; Dartmouth College; and the national AIDS Hotline conference in Washington D.C. As an actor, Bruce was recently seen in Portland Stage Company’s production of Das Barbecu.

The Maine Gay Men’s chorus is one of the region’s most popular singing groups, and Oak Street Theatre is thrilled to be hosting a Pride preview concert with the group the second Saturday of the festival. The intimate Oak Street Theatre space promises to be a memorable venue to hear their unforgettable sound. The final addition to the festival is a local production of “Brave Smiles...Another Lesbian Tragedy,” by the Five Lesbian Brothers. This delightful campy piece tells the outrageous story of five young women from an all-girl’s school while skewering lesbian stereotypes from popular film, literature and theatre.

Tickets to the festival, including festival passes are currently on sale at the theatre. As last year, a portion of the festival’s proceeds will benefit Portland’s Pride Committee.
Penobscot Theatre Company Presents:  
"Angels in America: Millennium Approaches"

"Angels in America: Millennium Approaches" Closes Penobscot Theatre Company's Pulitzer Prize Winning Season  
Winner of the 1993 Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award, Tony Kushner's landmark production, "Angels in America: Millennium Approaches," will have its Maine premiere at the Bangor Opera House, April 30-May 10. One of the most controversial and profound plays of the nineties, this ground breaking work deals with such issues as AIDS, gay rights, Mormon Doctrine and the Reagan political agenda. 

With the gay rights referendum still in the news, "Angels" is the perfect play to explore this volatile issue. The arguments in "Angels" are ripped straight from the headlines surrounding the referendum vote. Who is protected under the constitution? All citizens no matter what their gender, sexual orientation, race or religion? Or only those people that conservative society deems to be worthy of protection? 
The heart of "Angels" follows the lives of five gay men. Louis and Prior (Robert Saoud, Boston, and Ron Adams, Bangor), must deal with the daily effect of Prior's worsening AIDS condition on both their physical and emotional strength. Joseph Pitt (Greg Arata, Minneapolis), a married man, is continually struggling with the conflict of his homosexuality and his belief in the Mormon religion, while Belize (Reginald Wright, Boston), a registered nurse, faces many different struggles in the world because he is both gay and black. All four of these men's lives are intertwined in a fascinating plot that involves the downfall of one of America's most powerful attorneys, Roy Cohn. 

Robert Saoud (Boston) & Ron Adams (Bangor)

Lucie Blue Tremblay 

Singer-songwriter Lucie Blue Tremblay has been making music in the U.S. and Canada since her self titled album in 1986. She uses the power of her romantic balladry, the charm of her very personal self-accompanied performance, and her passion for bilingual heritage to weave a spell. And the magic works because Lucie Blue comes to her audience as a powerful truth teller, whose gift is to share her own honest human experience through her music. Lucie Blue's new CD "I'm Ready" is a powerful and diverse collection of her music which contains both live and studio cuts. 

Having performed in Carnegie Hall/NYC, the Expo 1992 in Seville/Spain as well as in Saint Malo /France, Lucie Blue has had the distinct pleasure to perform with James Taylor and Randy Newman. This year will find Lucie on her "I'm Ready" tour in the U.S. and Canada as well as Australia and New Zealand. 

Lucie Blue Tremblay will be performing "A Concert For Pride" June 20 at 8 pm (Special Guest Annie Clark) in Portland's own State Street Church 159 State Street Portland. $50 Patron Ticket (Reserved Seat, Listing in program book, Contribution deductible to extent allowed by law). $20 Preferred Seating, $17 General Admission. Tickets at Drop Me A Line, Portland, MacBean's Music, Brunswick, Or charge by calling 207-775-6002

Presented by Southern Maine PRIDE 
NOTE: You can catch a sneak preview of Lucie's gala Pride concert when Lucie appears at Jonathan's in Ogunquit on June 5 (1-800-464-9934 for info) and The Left Bank Cafe in Blue Hill, Maine on June 6th (207-374-2201 for information)

Lucie Blue Tremblay
Partners Of The States 45,000 To Get Benefits

Eugene, Ore. (AP) Domestic partners of the state's 45,000 employees, whether gay or heterosexual will be eligible for health benefits beginning June 1, the Public Employees' Benefit Board decided Tuesday.

In a unanimous vote, the board added domestic partners to a growing list of states, cities and companies that have extended benefits to co-habiting couples.

"It's finally the right thing being done," Kelly McMorris, one of two gay employees who sued the University of Oregon last year, claiming the school had discriminated against them by denying health benefits to their partners.

McMorris, associate director of residence life, said he and his partner probably will drop their lawsuit in the wake of the decision.

"We really wanted the university to do the right thing, period," he said.

Nationwide, the states of New York and Vermont have adopted similar policies along with an estimated 80 other government entities.

The city of Eugene extended such benefits earlier this year, joining the Eugene Water & Electric Board, the city of Portland and Multnomah County.

A couple hundred private companies, including Oregon, Sony, Intel, Bank of America and Hewlett-Packard, offer the same coverage.

"Anything that makes us a more attractive employer helps in recruitment and retention," said Linda King, the university's director of human resources.

Lawyer Who Fought Gays, Now Fights For Gays

LAWRENCE, Mass. (AP) A lawyer who argued before the U.S. Supreme Court four years ago in support of banning gays from Boston's St. Patrick's Day Parade is now fighting on behalf of gays who want to march in Lawrence.

Boston attorney Charles Darling is representing the Gay and Lesbian Community Advocates of Lawrence, or GLCAL, in its bid to stage a gay-pride parade in Lawrence.

Darling said the unusual alliance was born when he read a report last week in The Eagle-Tribune of Lawrence stating that the group's request was denied by the City Council's Ordinance Committee.

Officials had told the newspaper that parade organizers failed to complete paperwork and appear before the council to discuss the proposal.

City religious leaders had previously urged the committee to ban the parade, Darling said.

"My clients are trying to communicate their message and it is their First Amendment right to do so," said Darling, who is working for the group free of charge. "That's why I contacted them to offer my services."

Just four years ago, Darling was representing a very different group of activists - the South Boston Allied War Council - in their efforts to prohibit a group of gays from marching in their annual St. Patrick's Day Parade in the city's South Boston neighborhood.

Lower court orders had forced the veterans council to allow the Irish-American Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Group of Boston, or GLIB, to march in 1992 and 1993. In 1994, sponsors canceled the parade rather than allow the gay group to participate.

In June 1995, the Supreme Court ruled 9-0 that the parade was a private event and symbolic form of free speech and, therefore, the veterans had the right to decide what groups and messages were to be included.

The following year, Darling was named as an honorary marshal in the parade. But Darling says his advocating against gays in South Boston does not contradict his recent work for the Lawrence gay organization, which he called "responsible" and "well-established."

"I was never against gays. I had no problems representing veterans who wanted to exclude the message of an extreme group from out of town," said Darling, who claimed many of GLIB's members were not from the Boston area.

"I was also against judges ordering my clients' speech altered to the point where they had to cancel their parade," said Darling.

The Lawrence City Council is scheduled to act on the Ordinance Committee's recommendations on Tuesday.

Should officials refuse to grant the marchers a permit, Darling said he will file a federal lawsuit against the city.

Lawrence city officials did not return phone calls seeking comment.

Pride Schedule: "Courage to be Ourselves"

Southern Maine Pride in their 12th annual event is continuing the traditions of providing networking, entertainment and visibility in the largest such New England event for the gay community north of Boston. The Portland event brings together communities from all over Maine, both rural and city with attendance in the thousands.

In light of the February 10th set back to gay rights in Maine, this year's festival is likely to be one of the most important gay and lesbian community gatherings of the century.

Pride Slogan: Courage to be Ourselves!

Schedule to date:

Saturday, June 13 Bus to Boston Pride Parade takes marginal way at 8 am returns to Portland at 8:30 pm. Tickets are $18 after May 15 ($15 till). Tickets include breakfast and movies on board, Boston Pride 'Kite.'

Sunday, June 14 (time, location TBA) Community Awards Dinner: Keynote: Massachusetts State Rep. Liz Malia. Liz is the first openly lesbian (or gay) Mass. State Legislator in over 20 year. Active in both Democrat and G/L politics for decades she is a living history resource of the movement for rights in one of Americas most "gay positive" States. Tickets are $25, Award recipients TBA shortly.

Wednesday, June 17 PRIDELIGHTS Concert: In Congress Square concert starts at 8:30 pm tree lighting at 9:30 pm (great and free entertainment will be lined up for our 3rd concert)

Thursday, June 18 a local made Movie Premier (TBA)

Friday, June 19 This year's Pride Pier Dance: At the Maine State Pier, 8 to midnite, cash bar (with ID) and soda bar, all ages. Tickets are $10 in advance and $12 at the door.

Saturday, June 20 Interfaith Service: (10 am to 10:45 am) Location TBA. Prepare parade/assembly in Monument Square. 10 to noon.

Parade to Deering Oaks: Starts at Noon from Monument Square, individual participation is free all others require parade permit, group registration (required) is $25 after May 15 ($20 now) groups are allowed 1 unadorned vehicle, float registration (required) is $25 after May 15 ($30 now) floats are vehicles with more than signs, trucks or vehicles with anything in tow. Motorcycles $5 with proof of vehicle registration.

Festival in Deering Oaks: 1 pm to 3:30 pm entertainment TBA vendors: 1/2 table $30 after June 1 ($20 till) full (8) table $40 after June 1 ($30 till).

PRIDE'S SATURDAY NIGHT CONCERT: With Lucy Blue Trembly Ticket information: 775-6002

Sunday, June 21, 1998 Sunset Cruise: (Cabarret entertainment, cash bar, buffet) $16

Tickets will be available in several southern Maine communities by May 15th for further ticket information call 879-7323. Lucie Blue Trembly: A Concert For Pride, June 20 at 8 pm (Special Guest Annie Clark) State Street Church 159 State Street Portland, $50 Patron Ticket (Reserved Seat, Listing in program MacBean's Music, Brunswick Or charge by calling 207-775-6002 Presented by Southern Maine PRIDE.
More People Opting Out Of Military
By Saying They Are Homosexual

BY SUSANNE M. SCHAFER AP
MILITARY WRITER
WASHINGTON (AP) More people are opting out of the military by declaring they are homosexual, Defense Secretary William Cohen said Monday, but he denied that there has been any increase in sexual harassment.

Cohen insisted the military's policy on homosexuals is working properly.

"We intend to continue to emphasize the fact that this policy should not be abused, that there should be no attempt to hunt or seek out those who are, may be homosexual, and that we intend to strictly enforce the 'don't ask, don't tell' policy," Cohen said, appearing at a photo session in the Pentagon.

The secretary was asked about a Pentagon study of the issue, which is now in a draft form and has not been made public.

"There are some indications that there has been an increase as far as some of the people who have declared themselves to be homosexual and have opted to get out of the military," Cohen said. "But in terms of the policy itself overall, I think it's working.

He did not elaborate.

However, the number of people who have either left or been kicked out of the service on grounds of homosexuality rose from 850 in 1996 to nearly 1,000 in 1997, according to a Pentagon official familiar with the study. The official, like Cohen, declined to say how many of those voluntarily said they were homosexuals so that they would be discharged.

A second official, who also spoke on condition of anonymity, said a variety of reasons appears to explain the increase. He said it appears many of those who are volunteering to disclose their homosexuality do so shortly after entering the service.

Some officers speculate that homosexuality may be used as an excuse by people who are unhappy with being in the military.

Those dismissed for homosexuality receive an administrative discharge, which does not carry a bad-conduct stigma.

The 'don't ask, don't tell' policy, adopted soon after President Clinton entered office, is supposed to allow gays to serve if they keep their sexual orientation private, but it punishes those who engage in homosexual acts or take actions that call attention to their orientation.

Commanders are not to ask about sexual orientation or launch investigations without credible evidence.

But critics of the Pentagon's approach say they believe harassment of homosexuals is on the increase.

"We think they are not following their own rules," said Dixon Osburn, the co-executive director of the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, a gay rights advocacy group. "We think there is a huge amount of harassment going on. ... Commanders are asking questions they are not supposed to be asking."

Osburn said the number of service members who were kicked out of the military on grounds of homosexuality steadily increased from 597 in 1994, to 722 in 1995 and 850 in 1996.

In its annual report released in February, the group said service members reported 563 "command violations" in 1997, including instances where they said they were asked about their sexual orientation or harassed in direct violation of the administration's policy.

The number was up from 443 violations reported in 1996, the Washington-based group said.

The report attributed the upsurge to a lack of commitment to the policy by top military and civilian authorities. Commanders in the field never received specific instructions on the limits on investigations, and service members were left with no recourse when their rights were violated, it said.

Michigan State Ready for Gay Pride Week

EAST LANSING, Mich. (AP) Benefits for domestic partners are just one issue that members of Michigan State University's gay and lesbian community will be celebrating during this week's Pride Week.

Domestic partner benefits are one of several signs of an improved campus climate for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students and employees, Brent Bilodeau said.

"It's certainly a significant step forward," said Bilodeau, the school's assistant for lesbian, bisexual, gay and transgender concerns. "When an institution supports policy inclusive of same-sex relationships, it sends a powerful message."

Pride Week starts Wednesday and runs through April 19 at Michigan State. Highlights include an April 13 film documentary on author James Baldwin, an April 14 gender workshop and the keynote address by author and activist Torie Osborn on April 16.

The university's gay and lesbian employees won a huge victory last fall when the university's board of trustees voted to extend benefits to same-sex partners.

So far, 32 people have registered for the benefits which range from health insurance to access to the university's recreational facilities at a total cost of $58,000 to Michigan State, human resources director Keith Groty said. More could sign up during an annual enrollment period that starts April 20.

The University of Michigan and Wayne State University also offer same-sex benefits.

In January, a bill outlawing the use of state money to pay for domestic partner benefits passed the Senate. House lawmakers have yet to address the issue.

If the bill, sponsored by Sen. Bill Schuette, R-Midland, becomes law, Michigan State still would pay for benefits through nonpublic revenue sources. The majority of the school's 5,000 union employees are entitled to the benefits in their contracts.

The environment for gays, bisexuals and transgender students has improved during the last four years, Bilodeau said. Training programs to raise awareness toward their concerns have roughly doubled, he said.
Two Gay Couples Take Prominent Roles In Campus Life At Irvies

By Brigitte Greenberg

Two gay employees are being honored by their employer today.

The couple's work is being recognized with special recognition.

The couple's work is being celebrated for their contributions to the company.

The couple's work is being acknowledged for their dedication and commitment.

The couple's work is being praised for their hard work and dedication.

The couple's work is being celebrated for their achievements.

The couple's work is being highlighted for their success.

The couple's work is being honored for their significant contributions.

The couple's work is being acknowledged for their hard work and dedication.

The couple's work is being celebrated for their outstanding achievements.

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