

REACH OUT the newsletter of Maine Speakout Project

Winter 04-05 • 343 Forest Avenue • Portland, ME 04101 • 207.874.1030 • tty 207.874.1043

Maine Speakout Project is a Program of **Community Counseling Center** 

"Being an ally is the process of working to develop individual attitudes, institutions and a culture in which people... feel they matter. This work is motivated by an enlightened self interest to end oppression."

~J. Jay Scott and Vernon Wall

Being an Ally

For the LGBT community, Allies are incredibly important and valuable. Speakout has many speakers who identify themselves as allies. They are mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, couples and grandparents. While each has come to Speakout for an individual reason, they are united in their need to speak up for their loved one(s). They are united in the belief that LGBT people matter and have value. Often these allies, especially when paired with a gay man, lesbian woman or transgender speaker, are extremely effective. They are able to provide a credible role model to our audience members who want to be supportive but simply do not know how. Mainers are able to identify and relate to another face of the LGBT community through allies.

Allies are most often talked about in terms of being heterosexual. Sisters, brothers and parents are straight allies. I would like to challenge that notion for Speakout volunteers. Certainly the LGBT community has straight allies, however, we all have opportunities in our speaking engagements and beyond to be allies to each other. Gay men can be allies to the transgender folks. Lesbian women can be allies to gay men. Transgender women can be allies to bisexual men. Adults from all of these groups can be allies to LGBT youth. Allying oneself with a group or person who is different is a great way to build bridges and work towards the non-divisive conversations and interactions that Speakout is known for throughout Maine. As Jane Matrisciano, author of *Speakout: A Spiritual History* says, "If this is education, it is educating people's awareness and their hearts more than their minds. Not that their minds might not change, but if they do it will be because their hearts have changed first."

Maine Speakout Project in 2004

107 Speakouts Across the State
5 Community Fundraisers
4 Walk With the Ones You Love Events
3 Speaker Trainings
1 Out of Our Closets Yard Sale

"Out of Our Pantries" Sneak Preview

This spring, Maine Speakout Project will be selling cookbooks featuring recipes submitted by supporters. Following is a delicious and easy recipe taken from "Out of Our Pantries."

7-Layer Mexican Dip

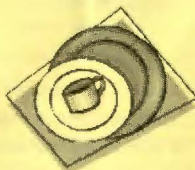
submitted by Tom Arvlsals, Warwick, RI

Ingredients

4 oz. cream cheese, softened	1 cup shredded lettuce
4 oz. sour cream	1 cup shredded cheddar cheese
1 tbsp. taco seasoning mix	1/2 cup sliced pitted black olives
1 cup salsa	

Method

Mix cream cheese, sour cream and taco seasoning mix. Spread evenly on bottom of 9 inch pie plate. Layer remaining ingredients over mixture. Refrigerate. Serve with tortilla chips.



Speakout Goals for 2005

As we enter into a new year, Maine Speakout Project (MSOP) is strong, resilient and continues to work for tolerance and respect for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in Maine and throughout the nation. We are not alone. We have the support of fair-minded Mainers. We have the support of other LGBT advocacy and education organizations like Equality Maine, Southern Maine Pride and Outright who share in this struggle. While each has its own mission, there is a common purpose. We each place high value on the lives of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and their allies that are a part of the rich and diverse culture of Maine.

Over the last year, we also made strides in working with other social justice organizations. Groups such as Maine Coalition for Peace and Justice, the Maine Civil Liberties Union, Allen Avenue Unitarian Church and the People's Free Space have each reached out to MSOP and showed that others value and respect our community. The importance of allied organizations cannot be overstated. Without their help and outreach, we would not have reached 107 Speakouts in 2004. It is essential that we continue to reach out to new and different groups and build bridges with our powerful message of open and non-divisive communication, face-to-face interaction and honoring people's ability to change.

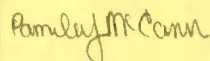
To this end, the following are some of our goals for 2005:

- To reach out to faith communities of all denominations in order to build connections.
- To offer more opportunities for speaking venues in rural communities.
- To train volunteers for the Everyone Counts in the Workplace program and create more venues for speaking engagements in businesses throughout Maine.
- To hold in-service trainings for all volunteers.

As you read over these goals, please take a moment to consider how you can help us achieve them:

- Can you help to arrange a Speakout at your church, community organization or place of business?
- Can you attend a Speakout as an audience member and show support for the other volunteers?
- Can you attend Walk with the Ones You Love or organize one for your neighborhood?
- Do you have a 1/2 hour, an hour or three hours to volunteer?

Maine Speakout is going strong because of the efforts of our volunteers and supporters. I thank you for your hard work and effort and hope to spend more time with you in 2005.



Pam McCann, Maine Speakout Program Coordinator

Maine Speakout Project Advisory Committee

Richard Bilodeau, Co-chair

Bob Carter, Co-chair

Eric Baxter

Elliott Cherry

Leslie Clark Brancato

David Cohan

Laura Gottfried

Tara Healy

Holly Howard

Connie Howe

Natasha Johnson

Lonnie (Lawrence) Leeman

Daniel Pelletier

Everett R. Perlman

How to Give

Contributions can be sent to:

Maine Speakout Project
343 Forest Avenue

Portland, Maine 04101-2006

*Or, use the contribution
envelope in this newsletter.*

How to Volunteer

Help us to get our speakers invited to your club, church, school committee or workplace lunch-and-learn. Get trained to become a speaker. Volunteer to work an event. There is so much you can do to help!

For more information, call Pam McCann at 207.874.1030 or send an email to pmccann@commcc.org.

MSOP Mission

The mission of Maine Speakout Project is to create a society that is inclusive and respectful of people of differing sexual and gender orientations by providing opportunities for non-divisive dialogue.

Speakout Volunteer, Jamie Gibson, Honored With Community Service Award

On Saturday, March 5, 2005, Equality Maine will recognize Maine Speakout Project volunteer Jamie Gibson with a community service award for her outstanding service to Maine's LGBT community. Held at the Holiday Inn by the Bay in Portland, Equality Maine's 21st Annual Awards Banquet will honor eight groups and individuals for their efforts in the struggle for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality. Equality Maine is proud to celebrate Jamie's leadership, which crosses many organizations. Jamie has been an active speaker with Maine Speakout Project, co-chair of Allen Avenue Unitarian Universalist Church's Diversity and Welcoming Committee, volunteer in Equality Maine's "Equality Knocks" grassroots organizing project and member of the planning committee for the 2005 Transgender Day of Remembrance. Congratulations Jamie!



Congratulations to the most recent class of Speakout Volunteers!

Chad Argotsinger, Bishop, Travis
Erickson, Darlene Huntress, Alley
Smith and Karen Wyman.
Also pictured, MSOP trainer Louise Tate.

Special Thanks

Thanks to the Stephen and Tabitha King Foundation! MSOP received a \$2,500 grant for statewide volunteer recruitment, training and retention.

Announcements from Portland Outright

As of February 1st, the new address of Outright is 999 Forest Avenue. There will be a public Open House on Thursday, February 17th.

More info will be up on the website, www.outright.org, as details are finalized.



Calling All Potential Volunteers 24 and Older!

Have you ever thought about sharing your experiences with, emotionally supporting and learning from young people? Then please consider becoming an advisor at Outright in Portland. Advisors play a crucial role in all of our programs and special events. Advisors must be at least 24 years old, be secure in their identity, emotionally available to support youth and willing to volunteer in an environment that supports youth leadership and self identity. People of color, transgender, HIV+ and multilingual (including ASL) adults encouraged to apply. If you're interested, contact us about our upcoming 28-hour training program scheduled for February/March. Email Jan@Outright.org or call 1.888.567.7600.

Speakout Wish List

- GASOLINE CARDS in any amount
- Pastel or brightly colored photocopy paper
- In-kind services for printing or copying

Hannaford Bros Committed to Diversity in the Workplace *by Ruby Parker*

The Hannaford Corporate Diversity Committee invited Speakout to Hannaford Bros last June to be part of a lunch and learn program, called Diversity Diner, to raise awareness of diversity and inclusion issues in the workplace.

Speakout's "Everybody Counts" is aimed at creating a more comfortable and productive workplace for out lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered employees. In a relaxed, informal setting Speakout speakers shared their personal stories. The stories evoked many questions and lead to a lively discussion. Honest sharing took place, in part because of the openness of the speakers from Speakout and also because the speakers were not company employees. Several of the Hannaford associates commented that the session was very worthwhile, giving them an appreciation of experiences different from theirs. One of Hannaford's Diversity Committee goals is to offer opportunities to increase awareness, mutual appreciation and create an inclusive workplace. Speakout certainly helped that day.

Hannaford is committed to diversity in the workplace. The "culture thrives on mutual respect, teamwork, and productivity in the workplace among people who are diverse in work background, experience, education, age, gender, race, national origin, physical abilities, religious belief, sexual orientation and other real and perceived differences." (Hannaford's Equal Employment Opportunity Policy)



Susie R. Bock, head of special collections at Sampson Center for Diversity in Maine, at the Transgender Day of Remembrance event at University of Southern Maine.



Above, Women in Harmony perform at the Transgender Day of Remembrance event. Below, Jamie Gibson speaks, while MSOP volunteer Jenn McCann interprets in sign language.



Speakout Recognizes Day of Remembrance by Joan G.

It was a dark and stormy night, as the old opening line goes. Actually, it was sunny and hot as we cruised up I-95 in Pam's car on the way to do a Speakout at Unity College.

Suddenly, the Mistress of Ambush turned to me and said, "So what do you plan to do for the Transgender Day of Remembrance (DOR) program?" Not wanting to let on that I had no idea of what she was talking about, I knew I had to come up with something clever very quickly. So I said, "I don't know."

Somehow she saw through my brilliant ruse and began to explain what the DOR was. She explained how, each year all across the country and the world, people honored the memories and grieved the loss of those who had been victims of mortal hate crimes simply because they were transgendered. I soon realized that this would not be an easy project to accomplish, but one that was well worth the effort. I resolved to look into the subject in more detail when I got home that evening.

After a slow start and a lot of "backseat driving" on Pam's part, we finally started to form the core of a committee to make this thing happen. There were brainstorming sessions and ideas were flying left and right. Just when we would come to a consensus on a plan someone would come up with a new idea and we were back to square one. The only thing that never wavered was the fact that we were running out of time.

The day Susie Bock from the USM library generously offered a suite of three rooms on the 6th floor as a possible location for our little event was when things started to gel. Now we had a space to work with and its finite dimensions served to limit many of our grandiose schemes and bring us back to earth. From this point forward, though you wouldn't have guessed it if you attended any of our meetings, we were making progress.

What made all the problems and tribulations we had along the way worthwhile was when we went from "Is anybody going to show up" to "Where are we going to put all these people?" in a matter of 30 minutes. The turnout was tremendous and most gratifying. From that point on the ceremony developed a life of its own and took wing.

All who were involved can be proud of what we accomplished that day. Victims of transgender violence who were struck down for openly living as their true selves were remembered and honored. I won't try to list all the people who were involved with this project in one capacity or another for lack of sufficient space here. I would like to say thank you to each and every one of you though because when it came down to it, you were the ones who made it happen.

Already plans are being discussed for next year's event. This year's success will no doubt allow us to acquire larger facilities, more resources and personnel. Bigger is usually considered better in our society and that is fine just as long as we don't lose sight of why we are doing this. Someday we will all be able to live our lives as only we know they should be - safe from fear and threats of violence. See you next year!

Battling Isolation in Wake of Gay Marriage Bans

by Margo Williams,
365Gay.com Boston Bureau

Following the Nov. 2 election in which 11 states passed constitutional amendments banning same-sex marriage, gays and lesbians have been left feeling isolated.

But a new research paper by the Institute for Gay and Lesbian Strategic Studies, a think tank in Amherst, Massachusetts, says there are concrete ways to resist feelings of isolation, stress and sadness in the wake of the election that saw gays stereotyped and where open hostility became dominant themes.

The acrimony created during the campaigns challenged the psychological well-being of LGBT people, the Institute says.

"I've heard many stories about fear, sadness and a sense of loss from people all over the country," said Dr. Glenda Russell, author of the report. "Putting the civil rights of one group to a vote takes an enormous psychological toll on members of that group, as well as on communities and on families."

After Michigan voters amended the state constitution to ban same-sex marriages, Greg Varnum saw this impact first-hand at Eastern Michigan University. He described the aftermath of the vote: "In my role as student coordinator of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Resource Center, I have seen people dealing with surprise, anger and sadness with a sense of powerlessness and a desire to want to know what to do next."

The report, entitled "Surviving and Thriving in the Midst of Anti-Gay Politics," presents three primary strategies: analysis, action and allies.

LGBT people should analyze the homophobia present in the campaign, take action to resist anti-gay efforts and draw on the support of heterosexual allies, Russell said, noting that heterosexual allies play a particularly important role in reducing feelings of isolation in addition to the value of their political support.

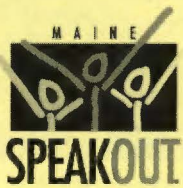
"The research on how people get through the tough political times shows that these strategies work," according to author Glenda Russell, a psychologist and IGLSS senior research associate.

"Although you can't shut out the negative messages about gay people that blanket a community during a campaign, we can respond to them in constructive ways."

The new report outlines strategies for individuals and for organizations.

Community organizations of all kinds can provide important outlets for individuals to work through their feelings productively.

"Since the federal marriage debate is likely to pick up again," predicted Lee Badgett, IGLSS research director.



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Maine Speakout Project is a Program of

**Community
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a United Way member agency

Upcoming Events

February 17th, MSOP Volunteer Speaker Training
University of Maine, Orono

February 26th, Charlie Howard Benefit Auction and
Potluck Congregational Church, Bangor

March 5th, MSOP Volunteer Speaker Training
Community Counseling Center, Portland

March 5th, Equality Maine Awards Banquet
Holiday Inn By the Bay, Portland

March 19th, MSOP Volunteer Speaker Training
Unitarian Universalist Church, Bangor

April 29th, Community Counseling Center's Express
Yourself! Art Auction *The Woodlands Club, Falmouth*

Spring, "Out of Our Pantries" Cookbook
Available for Purchase

June 12th, Walk With the Ones You Love *Back Cove,
Portland (3:00pm - 5:00pm)*

MSOP Upcoming Speakouts

February 10th, Deering High School

February 14th, University of Maine at Presque Isle

February 14th, DHHS Presque Isle

February 27th, Unitarian Church, Norway

March 8th, Belfast High School

March 8th, Camden Community School

March 16th, University of Maine at Augusta

March 18th, Counseling Class, University of Maine at Orono

March 21st, Rape Response Services of Bangor

