
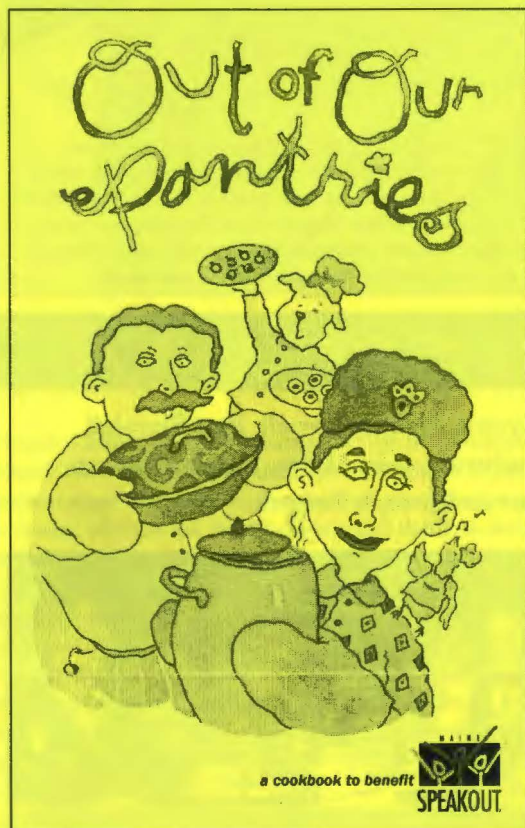




# REACH OUT the newsletter of Maine Speakout Project

Summer 2005 • 343 Forest Avenue • Portland, ME 04101 • 207.874.1030 • tty 207.874.1043

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



Out of Our Pantries, a cookbook to benefit Maine Speakout Project will be hitting bookshelves soon! The cookbook will feature over 150 diverse recipes and will be sold for \$14.95. The cookbook will include appetizers, soups & salads, main dishes, vegetables & side dishes, desserts & accoutrements from the pantries of MSOP volunteers and supporters. Stay tuned for more info on buying a copy!

Special thanks to all who have contributed to the *Out of Our Pantries* cookbook, including members of the Cookbook Sub-Committee, all those who submitted recipes and stories, and Abby Carter-Levin for designing the beautiful artwork throughout the entire cookbook.

## MSOP Seeking Donations for Out of Our Closets Yard Sale and eBay Auction

As you go about your spring cleaning, be on the lookout for items that you may no longer need! MSOP is collecting items for its second annual Out of Our Closets yard sale, which will be held on Saturday, June 25, 2005 (rain date: June 26th) from 9:00am - 1:00pm in the Community Counseling Center parking lot (343 Forest Avenue). We're looking for everything from clothes to music to furniture.

MSOP is also seeking donations of unwanted valuables as part of its first ever Out of Our Closets eBay auction. Items such as antiques, cameras, cell phones, collectibles, computers, designer handbags, jewelry, luggage, musical instruments and sports equipment will be accepted and sold by NextWorth Solutions, a Wellesley, MA based consulting service specializing in helping nonprofits fundraise by converting in-kind donations into operating capital. These items will be auctioned off on eBay in the beginning of July with the proceeds going to MSOP.

Items will be accepted at Maine Speakout Project's offices until June 24th. Call Pam at 207.874.1030 for more information. For a list of the types of items we are accepting for the eBay fundraiser, please visit [www.mainespeakout.org/images/ItemsWeAccept.pdf](http://www.mainespeakout.org/images/ItemsWeAccept.pdf). Or, contact NextWorth directly at 781.239.3994 or [sales@nextworth.com](mailto:sales@nextworth.com).

## All Things Just Keep Getting Better

As June and Pride Month begin amid the rain and fog, it is a little difficult to focus on the theme of the 2005 PRIDE Festivities for Southern Maine PRIDE. However, as I stop to consider the past year, the message rings true like never before. The past year has brought the passage of LD-1196 and a state registry for domestic partnerships in Maine. June marks the first anniversary of same-sex marriage in our neighbor Massachusetts, and the Connecticut legislature quietly passed a law that allows for same-sex domestic partnership independently of any activist action or advocacy. There is much to be excited about in New England, and Southern Maine PRIDE has planned an exciting week of events in celebration.

For the second year in a row Maine Speakout Project is hosting the kick-off event for Southern Maine PRIDE's activities. Walk With the Ones You Love, our annual event, held Sunday, June 12th from 3:00pm - 5:00pm, promotes the vision of a Maine where all families and couples are equally safe to walk in public. The Portland walk will start near the parking lot across from Hannaford's on Baxter Boulevard, and the event is being sponsored in part by 93.1 WMGX. Bring kids, dogs, grandparents and partners to celebrate and affirm all families in Maine. Other walks will be held in Kennebunk on Sunday, June 5th at the First Parish Unitarian Universalist Church of Kennebunk and in Bangor on Sunday, June 19th on Father's Day at Pickering Square at 12:30pm. These events are free and all are welcomed.

On Saturday June 25th, MSOP will hold its second annual Out of Our Closets fundraiser (rain date: June 26th). This event will feature clothes, books, furniture, knick - knacks and small appliances. All gently used and priced at a bargain. The event will be held from 9:00am - 1:00pm in the parking lot of Community Counseling Center at 343 Forest Avenue (across from Pier 1 Imports). A special feature of this year's sale is our newly added eBay component. Donated items of greater value, such as fine china, personal digital equipment, laptops, designer shoes and handbags will be available at an on-line eBay auction to benefit MSOP sometime in July. Be sure to bid early and bid often to capture these great deals.

Lastly, the *Out of Our Pantries* cookbook will be available for advance sales at PRIDE in the Park and at Out of Our Closets. Our cookbook features original artwork by noted artist Abby Carter-Levin, over 150 delicious recipes and stories from volunteers. We will be launching *Out of Our Pantries* this summer with a kick-off party and tasting.

MSOP is moving forward and expanding its services throughout Maine. We recently received a \$2,500 grant from the Maine Women's Fund funding the Transgender Day of Remembrance, a \$5,000 grant from the Sam L. Cohen foundation to help with operating expenses, trained over 12 volunteers to speak and have already completed over 50 Speakouts since January. I hope to see you at these exciting summer events. Please stop by and introduce yourself.

With care,  
Pam McCann



## 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](mailto: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.*

## MSOP Receives Grants

The Maine Women's Fund has awarded MSOP \$2,500 to fund the second annual Transgender Day of Remembrance. This event, held nationally for the past six years, commemorates the life of Rita Hester, a transgender woman who was brutally murdered for openly expressing her gender orientation. This year, the event will address gender and sexual violence by continuing to raise awareness and offer comfort and support to a community that is constantly threatened with violence. It will be expanded to include a morning training seminar for service providers specifically geared toward violence against the transgender community.

MSOP also received a grant from the Sam L. Cohen foundation in the amount of \$5,000 to help pay for expenses associated with our speakers' bureau.



Diane Hoff and Sue Estler volunteer at Maine Speakout Project's resource table at LGBT Exposition Day at the State House in Augusta on May 18, 2005. LGBT Exposition Day is organized by Equality Maine as an opportunity for groups to showcase their accomplishments and missions to the Maine Legislature.

## Congratulations to our newly trained Speakout volunteers!

Kyle Wright, Chanel Romney, Judy Eyerer, Melissa Lowell, Bev Blaisdell, Sherry Oliver, Rox French, Sharon Southwick, Julia Miller, Judith Simpson, Kara Shea, Jayson Bryant and Joseph Sargent.



Above, Melinda Plastas, Community Counseling Center's vice president of program services and CCC's president and CEO Leslie Clark Brancato at the Equality Maine Banquet on March 5, 2005. Left, MSOP volunteer Jamie Gibson, who received a community service award for her outstanding work with Maine's LGBT community at the banquet, poses with Marty Shaw.

## Letter to the Editor sent to Bangor Daily News by Dan Williams, MSOP Volunteer

Dear Editor,

In reading the article, "Avoiding special rights" (BDN, April 25) I would like to clarify the meaning of "special rights." As the law is written now, a heterosexual can get fired from his/her work, but does not, because of their sexuality. A homosexual can and does. A heterosexual can be denied credit, but is not, and a homosexual can and is often denied. A heterosexual can be denied public accommodations, but is not, while a homosexual can and is often denied. A heterosexual can be evicted from their apartment or living arrangements because of their sexuality, but is not, and a homosexual can and is often evicted.

So, who has "special rights?" If you are in doubt about the law the Governor signed and how it is written, call the Human Rights Commission in Hallowell and they will tell you just how it is written, how it can be interpreted and who has what recourse. It's an enlightening phone call! Perhaps if everyone had made that call, we would not be debating this issue. It seems the only ones who have an issue with the new law are the ones who do not have a clear understanding of what is humanly right for everyone.

Sincerely,  
Dan Williams





Debbie Macbride, a Speakout volunteer, tells her story at the legislative hearings for LD-1196 on March 21, 2005. Speakout volunteers and supporters, Natasha Johnson and Marty Hagglund, are in the background.  
(see article below for more on this day)

## MSOP Attends Public Hearings on Governor Baldacci's Anti-Discrimination Bill by Joan G.

Wednesday, March 23rd, 2005 marked the day the committee considering LD1196, Governor Baldacci's Anti-Discrimination Bill, opened its doors to get the public's reaction to this important piece of legislation. For those of you who may not follow what goes on in Augusta that closely, LD1196 will extend existing civil rights protections to members of the LGBT community of this state.

Organized by Equality Maine, the hearings were held in the statehouse office building. The large crowd of supporters and detractors took every available seat. A second, sound-only, room was opened to accommodate the numbers. Judging by the various buttons people were wearing, supporters of the bill outnumbered opponents by about 4 to 1. EqualityKnocks Coordinator and MSOP volunteer Darlene Huntress greeted us as we entered and offered us a neon-bright sticker that read LD-1196 = EQUALITY.

CCC vice president of program services Laura Gottfried, MSOP program coordinator Pam McCann and MSOP volunteers Debbie McBride, Jamie Gibson, Natasha Johnson, Willow Femmechild, Lucie Bauer, Annie Kiermaier, Peter Rees and yours truly were on hand to lend any support that we could. Apologies to other volunteers whose presence I missed. Debbie McBride gave a very emotional presentation detailing her experience transitioning, which led to her dismissal from her college teaching position. The emotional delivery and content of her story noticeably impacted several committee members, as did the many tales of discrimination that would follow that afternoon. It soon became apparent to the committee that discrimination against the LGBT community in Maine was much greater than previously thought.

When time was given to those people who opposed the bill, they immediately went on the attack. When they weren't threatening a people's veto or the collapse of private businesses, one speaker after another hit the same old talking point, passage of this bill would eventually lead to legalizing gay marriage in Maine. This recurring theme seemed orchestrated, and it was apparent to this observer that the committee members were feeling the same way too.

The entire process took 4 hours and even though there were many more people, almost all exclusively pro LD1196, who wished to speak, it was mutually decided to adjourn this public forum and call it a day. It was a very successful day for the supporters of equal rights in Maine to say the least. This became evident when just 2 days later, the committee elected to move the bill forward for debate in the legislature by a vote of 12 for and 1 against.

Was it worth it to "Take the drive on 95," as the TV commercial states? By all means it was! Not only to see the legislative process in action but to be a part of it was a wonderful experience. Hopefully, this third time will be the charm as they say, and Maine will be able to join the rest of New England and a growing number of other states in the U.S. who believe in equality for all of their citizens.

## Articles of Faith: Reframing Issues of Religion, Public Policy and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community

*A Statement from The National Religious Leadership Roundtable of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Religious Leadership Roundtable*

**"In my efforts to understand the political and religious issues, I want to ask: How do you differentiate between homophobia and religious beliefs that say that homosexuality is a sin?"** *The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force received this question on religion and homophobia by e-mail. A frequently asked question, we offer a response from the National Religious Leadership Roundtable.*

In the case of most people who claim religion as a motivation for their anti-gay beliefs, their opinion is not based on a nuanced understanding of their scripture and tradition, but on teachings perpetuated by churches, families and religious leaders. Although their religious instruction may have portrayed beliefs condemning gay people as immutable theology, there are scholars in every major religious tradition that have proposed convincing alternatives to assumed anti-gay readings and traditions. Faced with the wide array of religious opinion on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, one can only refer to continued belief in anti-gay teachings as a choice.

The implications of choosing one set of religious teachings over another are important when it comes to public policy. For instance, there was a time when most Christians in America opposed interracial marriage, and the laws of the state reflected this belief. The 1964 Virginia Supreme Court ruling upholding the state's anti-miscegenation law made a direct appeal to the divine:

*"Almighty God created the races white, black, yellow, malay and red, and he placed them on separate continents. And but for the interference with his arrangements there would be no cause for such marriages. The fact that he separated the races shows that he did not intend for the races to mix."*

In 1967, the Supreme Court overturned all of the racist marriage laws in the states. Most Christian organizations that had resisted interracial marriage in the name of God eventually changed along with society and the state, and many have instituted racial justice programs in their denominations.

Faced with the long history of societal, legal, and religious change in favor of greater freedom and equality, the burden of proof rests on those who oppose equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people: Why is this belief so important?

As weak answers of "protecting traditional marriage" or "encouraging moral values" fall away, they reveal the face of homophobia. This is not to suggest that all those who oppose equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people for religious reasons are hateful people. But all homophobia sprouts from the same twisted root of hatred and fear of the different that underlies all racial, ethnic, religious, sexual, and social discrimination. When religion is used not to challenge prejudice, but to uphold it, it becomes a tool of hate.





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Maine Speakout Project is a Program of  
**Community**  
Counseling Center  
*a United Way member agency*

### Upcoming Events

**June 5<sup>th</sup>**, Walk With the Ones You Love *First Parish Unitarian Universalist Church, Kennebunk (10:30am)*

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

**June 15<sup>th</sup>**, PRIDE Reception *USM Glickman Family Library, 4th Floor, Portland (5:00pm)*

**June 15<sup>th</sup>**, PRIDE Lights, *Tommy's Park and Congress Square, Portland (dusk)*

**June 18<sup>th</sup>**, PRIDE Comedy Night *Comedy Connection, Portland*

**June 19<sup>th</sup>**, PRIDE Parade, PRIDE in the Park & Pier Dance, *Portland*

**June 19<sup>th</sup>**, Walk With the Ones You Love *Pickering Square, Bangor (12:30pm)*

**June 19<sup>th</sup>**, PRIDE Events *Ogunquit*

**June 25<sup>th</sup>**, Out of Our Closets Yard Sale *Community Counseling Center parking lot, Portland (rain date: June 26th)*

*Out of Our Pantries Cookbook Available for Pre-Sale Purchase*

### MSOP Offices Moving

The Maine Speakout Project offices will be moving to 43 Baxter Boulevard in Portland at the end of June. Our mailing address and phone numbers will remain the same.

