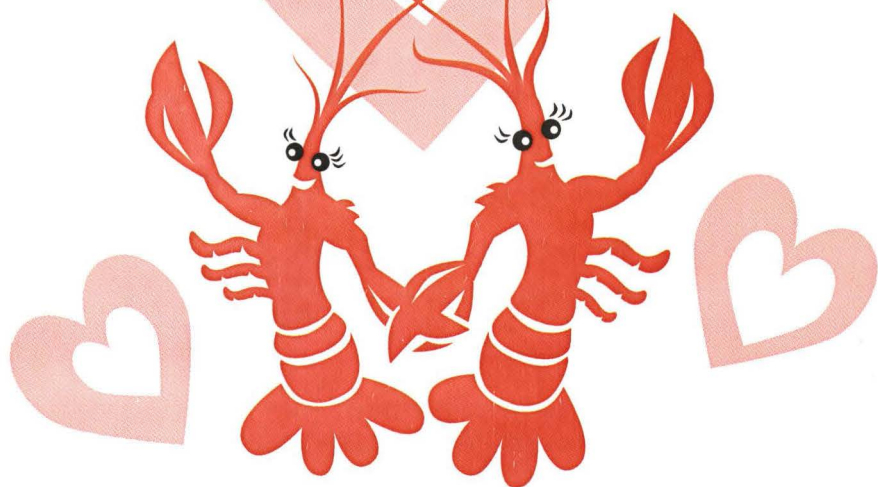


MSOP NEWSLETTER

S P R I N G 2 0 0 0

Walk with the One You Love!
Sunday, June 18, 2000



*Augusta
Bangor
Belfast
Brunswick
Kennebunk*

*Lewiston-Auburn
Portland
Peak's Island
Rockland
South Portland*

The Walk is a local community-building event that seeks to bring together persons of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, religious faiths and political affiliations. Your participation will affirm your commitment to helping our communities become places where all of us feel safe to walk with our loved ones in public without fear of harassment or humiliation.

www.mainespeakout.org

Maine Speakout Project, P.O. Box 15303, Portland, ME 04112-5303

P. 207-879-0480 · F. 207-775-4503 · MSOPProject@gwi.net

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**P.O. Box 2095, Augusta, ME 04338
(207) 622-0105 meshare@ctel.net**

WHAT'S HAPPENING OUT THERE?

Betsy Parsons @ the Hall of Flags, Augusta

Speaking to legislators in the Hall of Flags on February 18 was a turning point for me. A Portland teacher for more than two decades, I was there to represent GLSEN-Southern Maine (the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network) in the continuing struggle to make our schools safer for GLBTQ youth. But this was also the first time I have spoken publicly as an openly lesbian teacher in a nonacademic setting.

I came out to my teaching colleagues a few years ago in the context of a referendum campaign, but it is only this year that I have felt able to work as a "fully-out teacher" to the whole school community at Deering High School.

The Feb. 18 speaking engagement spurred my coming out to a brand-new crop of English students (freshmen and juniors) inherited at mid-year. In class, having first shared stories of two gay/lesbian former students who suffered greatly in Portland's high schools, I identified as a lesbian teacher and explained why I would be speaking in Augusta about the need for safer schools.

The result of this has been enhanced respect from my new classes and a powerful sense of a more open, authentic climate for discussion. One freshman wrote this note: "I knew that when I first entered your class that you would be one of my favorite teachers and you would help with students. I respect you so much more for this conversation. And I now know that you will really help create a safe environment for us."

The Portland Public Schools (my principal, Brenda Roy, and Central Office) supported my State House remarks on safer schools by releasing me from my teaching responsibilities on Feb. 18 and paying for the substitute. Privately, Ms. Roy also gave me warm personal encouragement as I prepared for the drive north.

These good moments behind, I joined the line-up of speakers in a frosty Hall of Flags while the big storm blew in. Following legislative leaders Pingree and Saxl, students, parents, youth advisors, social workers and the Attorney General, I stepped to the microphone.

Before me were the faces of concerned legislators, many of them familiar and dear to me - beloved former students now serving our state as leaders and lawmakers, parents of former students (I taught all of Joel Abromson's children, for example), folks with whom I have shared the work of several statewide education efforts since "Maine's Common Core of Learning," my own senator Jane Amero, professional colleagues, and friends. Many pieces of my life came together as I shared a student story and asked legislators to pass laws supporting civil rights and safer schools.

I was grateful for this opportunity to lift my voice in the company of such concerned and honest speakers. I was embraced by several legislators when the speeches were over.

Afterward I hurried back to school to pick up my paperwork from the day. February vacation had begun, but several students still lingered in the hallways with their friends. I was astonished that my new students, one by one, broke away from their friends and ran to speak with me: "How WAS it, Ms. Parsons?" "Are you OK?" "Was it hard?" "Were you scared?" "Did you get a law?" "Will you tell us in class about what you said?" "Will they make the schools safer now?"

One junior said, "When school is safer for gay and lesbian kids, it will be safer for all of us. Did you make the legislature understand that?"

I don't know if we did. But I am grateful for the hard work of Jonathan Lee and Speakout in organizing this event, which may have made a contribution toward that understanding. And I am deeply touched by my students' obvious concern for me and for each other. From this I take hope and courage.

Many of our young people are doing what they can to make schools more humane and decent places. I see evidence of this every day at Deering - in our Rainbow Alliance where straight and gay and questioning youth actively support each other, in the activities of our Civil Rights Team and our AIDS Awareness group, in my classes, and yes, even sometimes in the hallways.

Our English word "courage" comes to us through French and Latin words meaning "heart"; thus a courageous person is one who shows a great heart. I see many of our kids leading, with sensitivity and great hearts. I wonder: how well will we grown-ups follow?

Arthur Fink @ Portland Press Herald Community Forum, Portland

Most "speak out" engagements are hosted by a group that is simply seeking first person stories -- presumably to open up the issue of homosexuality in a new and more personal way.

But a recent speakout at the Portland Press Herald was quite different. They had assembled a gathering of "community leaders", including several of us from MSOP to advise them on how the paper is serving the community, and in what ways it is or is not meeting our needs.

I was there, along with Rev. Eric Kelly and Gerry Clement and we seemed to be the major organized group that was present. Amidst calls for simpler headlines on obituaries, more coverage of cultural events, and more local news in general, we had a strong message -- Treat gay people with dignity and respect. We thanked the Press Herald for their strong support of gay rights as an issue, but noted that their own policy of only printing "marriage" listings for heterosexual unions contradicted their own call for acceptance and non-discrimination.

My story was typical ... recently attending the wonderful marriage of two dear lesbian friends -- two women who have been teachers, guides, mentors to me -- and having to recognize that this marriage would not and could not be reported in the Press Herald. There could be no photograph, no description of their dresses or the vows, no words about the significance of this occasion.

Reporting such marriages is important not only to the people most closely connected. Keeping the greater Portland community in the dark about such marriages, and about other celebrations of commitment, only invites rumors about a "gay lifestyle" of shallow commitment and little depth. These stories need to be told, and the major newspaper has a particular opportunity and responsibility.

This was not a gathering at which the Press Herald was expected to announce any major policy shifts, and we certainly didn't hear anything on this matter. But in both the public forum and in informal discussions afterwards we made our point clearly and directly to those editors and managers who we believe are most involved.

You can help too. Write letters to the editor, call to speak with the publisher, and make your voice heard!

Editor's note: The wedding Arthur attended -- and that the Portland Press Herald would not acknowledge -- was that between Mary Hillas and Barbara Potter. See Barbie's reflections on the next page.

On a quintessentially gorgeous Maine day last September, Mary Hillas and I were married in our Quaker Meeting House, followed by an outdoor reception next to the tree filled graveyard with Anagrette Baier drumming, children as well as grownups dancing and eating the amazing wedding cakes baked by friends. Having lived together for 17 years, being in our early seventies and afflicted with the usual fears around a Lesbian marriage in a culture that continues to pass laws against it, we were surprised by the Spirit's clear leading to be married under the care of our Meeting community.

It was a decision that brought up many fears as well as exuberant hopes. Although there were a few in our Meeting who chose not to come, we were profoundly moved by the overwhelming love and support given us by our community, affirming the goodness of our love. As we left the Meeting Room after our simple Quaker ceremony everyone stood up spontaneously, clapped and shouted their joy -- not only for us but also, we believe, for themselves, knowing they had said "yes" to a lesbian marriage and a "no" to the dominant culture.

Before the wedding some friends had asked how we thought marriage might change our relationship. Having been already committed for years, we didn't know the answer and then not soon after the event, at least one answer came. This was in addition to the large liberation that comes when a great public "yes" is given to who you are by the community. We had added to our simple Quaker vows the promise "to honor and cherish" each other, not quite knowing why but loving the "cherish." Not long after the marriage we noticed that we had fallen into, again, bickering over some daily routines, how and who had the better idea for how things should be done, etc. We began to realize this was not a way to "cherish" each other, it was in fact in the way -- in the way of the most central, precious thing which was our intimacy, our love. We knew that we had publicly vowed to cherish each other, in front of witnesses, so we had to take this seriously. And so, with intention but not large effort, we began and have continued to let go of the small control issues, opening to the other's way, to our differences, laughing about them -- "onto" each other's stuff. What a gift. And finally, we have framed hanging in the wall of our bedroom the official wedding certificate used in all Quaker ceremonies. On it, as witnesses, are all the varied and wonderful signatures of everyone present, including the children. We are joined with Quaker couples through the ages in our commitment and in the support for it by our beloved community.

Paul Alpert @ Temple Beth El Senior Citizens, Portland

The Speakout was held at the weekly luncheon meeting of the Senior Citizens group of Temple Beth El in Portland, with about 18 people attending, 17 females and one male.

The group was quite friendly and receptive to our talks, and the question and answer period following was lively. One woman questioned how we could feel comfortable as gay men if the Bible does not approve of "two men lying together". We explained that the Bible was written centuries ago and things do change, and also as her Rabbi would tell her, there are many interpretations of the Bible called "midrosch" which certainly would condone homosexuality.

Another woman told us of her lesbian daughter, who after several marriages, faced up to her sexuality as a lesbian and is now living happily with her woman partner.

We did not know the answer to one question - where does the term "gay" come from ? - and the different speculations of the audience were interesting.

Over 20 people turned out on that beautifully clear Saturday morning on Church Street, just a couple doors down from another church, one which hosted groups supporting "the people's veto" of 1999. Ron Hersom, with the host church's pastors, a husband and wife team, had set up the meeting room comfortably in advance. Self-introductions revealed a number of clergy from the area, some of whom kept their sexual orientation in low profile. We represented a broad spectrum of Christian denominations, Buddhist and Catholic backgrounds, as well as a spread of ages from the 20's to at least the 70's.

Ron and I told our stories for the "Speak Out" portion of the morning with brief Q&A thereafter, before breaking into small groups to share our individual religious/spiritual journeys, hopes and visions over lunch. Returning to the large group, we were inspired by stories of courage in being supportive of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons in our rural, conservative communities and churches. I was particularly impressed by the story a man in our small group told. He put an announcement in the local paper about his lesbian daughter and partner's presenting him with a grandchild. He was expecting to be condemned by the community, but found that he was getting congratulations from most! We underestimate the capacity of the community to accept what has for too long been deemed unacceptable.

After evaluating the day's meeting, in preparation for returning to our communities, we identified practical steps we can take, individually and collectively, to speak out for love and acceptance of all, the true message of Christianity.

Cathy Bohls @ new speaker training, UMaine/Presque Isle

On Saturday, Feb. 5, Eilean Mackenzie and Cheryl Bradford trained six new speakers for the Aroostook County chapter of Maine Speakout Project. Three of the trainees were students from the Maine School of Science and Math, a magnet high school located in Limestone. One staff member of MSSM also took the training. The other two trainees are men from the Aroostook Community. One member of the chapter attended the training as a refresher course.

As MSOP coordinator for Aroostook County, I am very glad to have new speakers to call on. I have already had two requests for the youth to speak out; one of which is at Fort Fairfield High School as part of a safe schools day offered by Steve Wessler. The process of recognizing and affirming diversity among students, both in high school and on the college campuses, is of great importance here in Aroostook County and we have much work to do in this area. I hope to see many more requests for Speak Outs among youth.

On a personal note, one of the new speakers let me know that the inspiration to take the training was my story. This person had attended a speakout that I did last spring and decided then to take the training next time it came along. Hearing that gave me a real lift, and reaffirmed for me that the personal approach of Speakout touches people and creates change.

Linda Parker @ the Scarborough Rotary

I have mixed feelings about the Rotary Club Speakout. For me it seems like for every step we take forward we are still taking 10 steps backward.

I enjoyed meeting John Kittredge and hearing his story and I would love to say everything went just great. But in the days leading up to the speakout it became more of a personal issue for me because I work here and enjoy the job and almost everyone I work with are people who could make a difference. But for the most part any issue that MSOP would be concerned with gets a "we

just don't have any problems here in Scarborough" response. And I am still horrified by the feelings that most of the Rotary members have, literally 1960s mentality.

But for the good news. I came in after the Rotary and sat down with Dr. Richards and asked just what was his policy regarding gays and lesbians in the school system. It went very well, and continues to be something we talk about in passing. I also talked with the Director of Special Services again, and this week she has "It's Elementary" and the Middle School Video from Portland to view. We have discussed a special meeting of administrators from all the schools to view one of these in a mini-workshop and discussion on harassment. For me changes here have been all positive; the Rotary, on the other hand, felt like a rock wall.

Andie Locke @ the Lewiston Rotary

It was really terrific. I believe we had 60-70 in attendance, mostly older, white, businessmen, however, there were some women and some younger folks, also. Martha Palmer and I both spoke for about 4 minutes each, then we opened up the remaining 12 minutes to questions. We received some of the best questions I've ever been asked. They were insightful, inquisitive questions; you could tell they were really trying hard on this issue. Then, they shook our hands, gave us pens and thanked us for being there! Afterwards, we had several of the members comment to us about their lesbian daughter, their transgendered cousin, etc.

A week after the speakout I called to thank Jackie Kahn, the president of the Lewiston Rotary Club, and to ask her if she had any feedback. Oh, yes! She said she was very impressed with our speeches, our message and by the answers we gave to their questions. She knows it really made the members think and she noticed that fewer people than usual left early that day.

She related to me a conversation she had with the official "Thanker" (the person who does the official thanking to guests at the end of their speech). He told her at the beginning of the meeting he was the worst possible person they could have picked to thank us because of his opinions. But at the end, he was the best person they could have picked because of his new viewpoint! It was very gratifying to hear that!

Martha Palmer @ the Lewiston Rotary

Andie Locke called to see if I'd do a speakout with her for the Lewiston Rotary Club. This would be my second speakout. The first one for Seniors Plus was for a small group of about 10 employees. I was nervous and a bit disconcerted when I realized I knew two of the people present but I felt great afterwards. When Andie called I felt ready to try again.

The night before the event we spoke to confirm time and location. Andie then mentioned this speakout would be for about 60 people! Gulp! There would be a podium and a microphone!! I had never ever used a microphone! My confidence plunged.

Andie explained to me that Rotary meetings are run on a very strict time schedule. We were to eat lunch first (Eat!!), then have 5 minutes each to tell our stories and 10 minutes for questions. The entire time I politely tried to eat, I reinvented my story. I brought my cards from my first talk but just rearranged them over and over again.

We were asked to give business credentials to this group of professional people. Andie graciously went first and listed her schooling and career history and then gave her personal story. It was then my turn. I began by confessing that I was actually born and raised in Massachusetts -- there went my credentials!

I never did use my cards except to fiddle with while I talked. The podium turned out to be a blessing as no one could see my hands fidget. The first question was from a gentleman who asked how my husband reacted and were we a stronger family as a result. Honest, I didn't plant that one! It was a perfect question for us. Maybe he knew?!

The hardest and the best part actually came afterward as we talked to people and asked them to fill out the audience surveys. One gentleman kept saying "we can talk forever and not agree" and "What if science finds it is a choice?" The hardest and last statement he made was to the effect that "...if it is an instinct, one doesn't have to act it out." His example being if he was furiously mad at his friend he would not kill even if that's what his "instinct" told him to do.

I was not able to quickly respond then but I thought of the feelings this gentleman expressed to me for many days afterward. I've actually come to be very grateful to this man. These are areas I will try to incorporate into my next speakout. I wasn't able to answer that gentleman then but maybe because of his willingness to express his feelings, I might be able, God willing, to reach someone else more effectively next time.

Editor's note: After receiving this letter from the President of the Lewiston Rotary, it's pretty clear that their speakout was effective. Congratulations Martha and Andie! Here's the letter:

January 12, 2000

To organizations seeking an excellent speaker:

As President of the Lewiston Rotary Club, it is always interesting to hear the variety of speakers and topics that fill our year. Having at one time been in charge of programs, I can also appreciate how difficult it can be to get away from the same old/same old.

Several weeks ago our Lewiston Rotary Club was treated to a rather unique program and set of speakers. Andie Locke [and Martha Palmer] of Maine Speakout took our normally conservative club on a riveting ride into "understanding and acceptance." Andie is employed by the Auburn School System and is a well-spoken, soft-spoken champion of society's differences. The topic is covered quite well from contrasting points of view.

We normally ask one of our club members to express appreciation to the speakers. Our candidate to handle this task spoke with me after the meeting. He knew he was going to thank the speakers, but was unaware of the topic. Early into the presentation he felt that he should be the "last" person to express thanks...at the conclusion of the presentation, he understood that he was one of the best choices to offer praise. We generated more positive questions and comments during this presentation than we have all year.

I would be happy to speak with you if you have any questions.

Most sincerely,

Jackie Kahn

President, Lewiston Rotary Club

At the February 6th "Reclaiming Our Faith" event at the Old South Congregational Church (UCC) in Farmington there was a Baker's Dozen present from seven different religious/spiritual communities.

UM/Farmington student Sharon Parker told about her vivid memory of looking (when just five years old) at a wedding dress advertisement illustration of two women standing together in their gowns. Sharon thought the two women must be marrying each other and remarked about it to her mother. She still remembers her mother's response: women don't marry each other.

Bill and I told how we reacted when our son, at age 25, told us he is gay. As the saying goes, when an offspring comes out of the closet, the parents often go in. Fortunately there was a light in the closet and some books...and after many months Bill and I started acting supportive rather than merely tolerant. I often close my story with, "I once was blind, but now I see, thanks be to God."

After the stories, over soup and bread, we discussed, among other things, what we can do to reduce discrimination, as individuals (speak out when we hear offensive language; be proactive, etc.) and as a community (network/reach out; sponsor a Stop the Hate vigil in October; encourage pro-diversity groups such as school Civil Rights Teams; etc.)

Fern Stearns @ Bangor Peace & Justice Center

At the Peace and Justice Center in Bangor on February 11th a speakout was held following a showing of a 37-minute video "It's Elementary." Some two dozen people turned out despite a snow-storm that prompted a number of organizations to cancel their events. The film showed real-life discussions about sexual orientation that have taken place in various United States schools. (To borrow the video from the UM's College of Education and Human Development, contact Dr. Sandra Caron @581-3138 or at sandy.caron@umit.maine.edu).

P&J member Doug Allen led the discussion about the film, then introduced Maine Speakout speakers Bill Stearns, Kevin Gilgan, and myself. To complement the film's school-theme, Bill told about his gay son's memories of what it was like for him and other questioning students to see a schoolmate being harassed - tortured - by bullies who perceived him as gay. Is it any wonder that, according to best estimates available, a gay or lesbian youth is at least three times more likely to commit suicide than straight youths? Kevin, who lives with his partner in Brewer, has a teenage daughter currently in high school. Some of her classmates who know that her father is gay are inclined to think that she must therefore be lesbian. This assumption has caused a number of serious complications in her life.

Following Kevin's story, there was considerable discussion about the far-reaching effects of discrimination. Contrary to what people with their heads in the sand think, not only youths who actually are gay or lesbian suffer, but youths who are perceived as such - or have a huge fear of being so perceived. Regarding the latter, psychologist Peter Rees of Ellsworth says many straight boys, fearing such perceptions and attendant harassment, do not participate in extracurricular music or plays.

Several people in the audience said how wonderful it will be when - after it becomes illegal for school administrators to fire employees because of sexual orientation - more teachers feel free to come out and serve as role models for students.

Robert Taylor @Hancock County Sheriff's Office Training

On February 8, 2000, four Speakout volunteers - Tamara Duff, Marshall Hughes, Karen Swan, and I attended a regular monthly training session sponsored by the Hancock County Sheriff's Department. We met in one of the trial rooms at the county courthouse. Fascinating location.

All of us had been looking forward to this Speakout, but several unfortunate circumstances kept the attendance much lower than we had anticipated. The January session had been postponed because of bad weather until the week before our session. Clearly there were some who were not able to come to an evening meeting two weeks in a row. Then, sometime that afternoon, a big fire broke out on Mount Desert Island, keeping even more people from being able to attend.

However, the four who did show up, two park rangers and two police officers, were eager to proceed, so we did. Those of us from Speakout were an extraordinarily well-balanced group. Tamara talked about her experiences as the sister and mother of gay men; Karen talked about what it was like to grow up as a lesbian, through marriage and motherhood to happiness in a long-term relationship with a woman; I talked about having survived two uncomprehending societies - small-town Texas and the Army; and Marshall told how his years as a minister had led him to seek ways to bring more tolerance and understanding into people's lives.

A spirited and enlightening discussion followed these remarks - from how best to deal with men who deface government property by writing on restroom walls to nude swimming on Mount Desert to how gay couples decide which is the man and which is the woman (Answer: we don't have to decide; each does what he or she is most comfortable doing.) Karen gave a wonderfully sensible and loving answer to the question of how she feels about whether her children will be gay or not. She said, "I tell them to wait till they fall in love, and when they do, to look and see what sex that person is. Then they'll know. And I'll know."

One of the park rangers was hesitant about asking one question. He said he didn't want to be prejudicial in his thinking, but....He has noticed something unusual - that the gay couples he has come across are....nicer to each other than other couples. He wondered why that is. We were too delighted to give him a clear answer.

Tamara Duff @ Hancock County Police Training Council & AAUW, Mt. Desert Island

On February 8 we did a speakout with the Hancock County training Council. There were representatives of police departments and the Park Service. A small group but we had a real discussion. Our speakers were Robert Taylor, a writer, Karen Swan, a teacher, Marshall Hughes, a minister, and myself, an artist and gardener. After sharing a bit of our personal stories we addressed questions and concerns of the police and park rangers: How to talk to someone you stop who is fearful because of who they are. How to deal with situations with less awkwardness. About feeling safe in going to the police and how community and officials can communicate this.

On February 17 we did another speakout with the American Association of University Women (AAUW) on Mount Desert Island. Our speakers were Lin Gould, David Stillman and myself. David (a minister) talked about his journey with his church to becoming open and affirming; Lin (a teacher) about herself and MDI high school. Much of the discussion was about youth and schools. How to make all our young people feel welcome, safe, and free to be themselves. The group was very supportive and shared some of their own stories.

It seems that over and over again in our speakouts we come to how our various communities can be more welcoming and affirming. Our audiences major comment is how much they learn from our personal stories. That they begin to understand on a personal level. That what and how we do these speakouts reaches them. In short, what we do works and it allows our audience to share some of their stories, too.

Jean Vermette @ Community Health & Counseling, Bangor

Paul Jordan and I were the speakers. There were about 20 crisis workers and adult case workers present. The talk went from about 12:30-1:30 pm.

Everyone was pleasant and Paul and I were well received. The conversation/questions after our talks revolved mostly around how the case workers might be able to make clients who are different in some way (especially gay or transgendered clients) feel more accepted and at ease. Paul and I both pointed out that (among other things) simply recognizing the basic dignity of minority clients, not making assumptions about their private lives, and not attaching any "moral" value to their minority status (e.g. being gay is "bad") would go a long way in making them feel more comfortable and more willing to be open with the case workers about their feelings and needs. Further discussion was about the need of mental health professionals to recognize, accept, and deal honestly and non-judgementally with what may be a client's underlying cause for such things as depression or substance abuse: some kind of minority status which is ignored and denigrated (e.g. if the client were gay, transgendered, black, etc.). Those really were the main points.

Our speaking engagements take a lot of time, energy and money to secure. Please help us to hold more dialogues with groups in your town by contacting Ron Hersom, our Venues Coordinator, with suggestions for future speakouts. He can be reached at Rhersom@aol.com or by calling him in Bangor at 941-0969.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

SPEAKING OUT FOR SAFER SCHOOLS

These are the headlines and first two paragraphs of a front-page story in the Bangor Daily News weekend edition of February 19-20:

"STUDENTS SEEK SAFER SCHOOLS: Teens tell lawmakers gays at risk in Maine.

Augusta - They are routinely insulted, ostracized, spit on, harassed, stoned and beaten. They have a higher rate of alcohol and drug abuse, and are more likely to drop out of school than their peers. They also are two or three times more likely to commit suicide.

On Friday, speaking before 75 legislators in the Hall of Flags, a half-dozen gay students said they were unsafe in their own schools. Since their teachers, superintendents and school boards seemed powerless to help, they asked the legislators for assistance."

The participants in this presentation to legislators, hosted by House Majority leader Mike Saxl and Senate Majority Leader Chellie Pingree, included youth, teachers, and parents from Downeast Outright, Mount Desert Island High School Gay/Straight Alliance, Maranacook Rainbow Alliance, Outright-Portland, Downeast GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian Straight Education Network), Southern Maine GLSEN, Maine Speakout, Portland Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), the Maine Children's Alliance, and Attorney General Andrew Ketterer. They were eloquent and effective spokespersons and I want to thank each of them for helping to focus greater public attention on the unsafe conditions in our schools for those who are seen as "different."

The media coverage of this public event was excellent: Maine Public Radio did a story as did television news on Channels 6, 8, 13, and Fox-51 and the Portland Press Herald ran a story, too. *Part of solving a public problem requires convincing a critical mass of the public that there is a problem and that a solution is possible.* I think our February 18th Hall of Flags presentation made a valuable contribution towards that end.

We look forward to generating more public dialogue and sharing of personal experiences in the interest of ensuring safe schools where every family can belong, where every educator can teach, and where every child can learn, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other difference.

WALKING WITH THE ONE YOU LOVE

We are making a big jump this year in sponsoring Walks with the One You Love in many towns throughout Maine. We are doing this because we think the Walks are a very good way to bring everyone in a community together, whatever their sexual orientation or gender identity, to make a strong, positive statement that our communities need to be safe for everyone to walk with the one he or she loves without fear of violence or insult. It's a good way to raise awareness that some of us do not currently feel safe where we live or go to school. And not only to raise awareness but to help change community attitudes in the process.

Please try to participate in, endorse, or sponsor a Walk in your town or region. Love needs you!

AMERICA SPEAKS OUT SUMMER INSTITUTE IN MAINE

Last year, through our *America Speaks Out* initiative, we provided trainings to groups outside of Maine interested in developing their own speakout programs: in Tucson, Atlanta, St. Petersburg (Florida). This year, with a second grant from the Deer Creek Foundation of St. Louis for *America Speaks Out*, we are offering more trainings to individuals and organizations from states other than Maine through a Summer Institute in Maine. The *America Speaks Out Institute* is scheduled for August 10-13 (Thursday-Sunday) in the South Portland. The cost to participants is \$170, which includes 4 nights in a dormitory setting and breakfast and lunch for 4 days*.

We will be providing the basic speaker training, a training-of-trainers, and workshops on getting venues, working with local media, and targeting programs to specific issues, i.e. people of faith communities and safe schools. For more information, contact our Portland office. Persons of all sexual orientations and gender identities are welcome.

It's not too early to register. We can promise you a great training in one of America's prettiest coastal towns.

**Editor's note: This is a great deal!*

Want to live in a community that values diversity where everyone can feel free to be themselves in public without fear of harassment or violence, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other difference?

If your answer is Yes, then you should be planning to

Walk With The One You Love

Sunday, June 18th in:

**Augusta • Bangor • Belfast • Brunswick • Kennebunk
Lewiston-Auburn • Portland • Peak's Island • Rockland • South Portland**

You can help make this Walk a successful community even by: *Endorsing* it as a non-profit organization or individual. *Sending* flyers to your group's members to encourage them to participate. *Becoming* a business sponsor (sponsorships range from \$25 - \$2000). *Asking* your local town council to proclaim June 18th "Walk With The One You Love Day." *Telling* your local media why you are walking. *Inviting* friends, family, and your elected representatives to walk with you.

Yes. I/We want to help organize a Walk in _____.

Yes. I/We want information on the Walk closest to me/us.

Yes. My congregation, service club, group or non-profit organization wants to endorse a local Walk.

Levels of Sponsorship:

A - level \$2,000+ *B* - level \$1,500-1,999 *C* - level \$1,000-1,499 *D* - level \$500-999
E - level \$250-499 *F* - level \$100-249 *G* - level \$50-99 *H* - level \$25-49

Benefits of Sponsorship:

- Exclusivity by business type for Major Sponsors (A)
- Link to your website for 4 months (A)
- Paragraph describing your company in Program Book (A-C)
- An opportunity to display a banner at Walk staging grounds (A-E)
- An ad in the Walk Program Book (will be distributed at Walks in Maine) (A-H)
- Media Sponsor: Print/TV/Radio will receive all of the above benefits.
- Your logo will appear on the official Walk tee-shirts (A-C)
- Banner ad on our Web site for 4 months (A-C)
- Your logo will appear in any advance publicity (A-D)
- Your company/business will reach a statewide audience (A-H)

Yes! I/We want to sponsor a Walk at the level indicated below:

☐ *A* - level \$2,000+ ☐ *B* - level \$1,500-1,999 ☐ *C* - level \$1,000-1,499
☐ *D* - level \$500-999 ☐ *E* - level \$250-499 ☐ *F* - level \$100-249
☐ *G* - level \$50-99 ☐ *H* - level \$25-49

Enclosed is a check for \$ _____.

Please Return to: Maine Speakout Project, P.O. Box 15303, Portland, ME 04112-5303

Maine Speakout Project is a statewide, tax-exempt 501(3) educational organization.

All contributions are tax-deductible to the full extent allowed by law.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

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UPCOMING EVENTS

March 30

Thursday, Augusta, 5:30-6:30pm, *Walk with the One You Love* organizing meeting, St. Mark's Episcopal Church, 9 Summer Street.

April 5

Wednesday, "What is Marriage For?: Same Gender Marriage, Law and Society," with Mary Bonauto, GLAD, Jennifer Wriggins, USM Law School faculty, E.J. Graff, author of *What Is Marriage For?*; USM library, Forest Ave/Bedford St, 4th floor conference room, 5-7:30 pm. All welcome.

Wednesday, Bangor, *Walk with the One You Love* organizing meeting; 5:30-6:30, Hammond Street Congregational Church, High Street

April 6

Thursday, Brunswick, *Walk with the One You Love* organizing meeting, 5:30-6:30, Curtis Memorial library, 23 Pleasant Street, 2nd floor seminar room.

April 22

Saturday, 9-4, *Speaker Training*, UU Church, 169 Pleasant Street, Auburn

April 26

Wednesday, Kennebunk, 4:30-5:30, *Walk with the One You Love* organizing meeting, Christ Church, 12 Dane Street.

May 6

Saturday, 9-4, *Speaker Training*, First Universalist Church, 345 Broadway, Rockland

May 30

Tuesday, Bar Harbor, *Hylie Lovely and Friends perform at Carmen Verandahs* for Speakout, 9pm, Main Street.

June 18

Sunday, *Walk with the One You Love* in a town near you!

August 10-13

Thursday evening-Sunday evening, *America Speaks Out National Institute*, South Portland

September 16

Saturday, *MaineShare Bike-a-thon*, Bradbury Mt. State Park, Pownal

MAINE SPEAKOUT PROJECT

PO Box 15303

Portland, ME 04112-5303

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WWW.MAINESPEAKOUT.ORG