

NETWORK NEWS

Vol. 1, No. 2

Fall 1998

Calendar

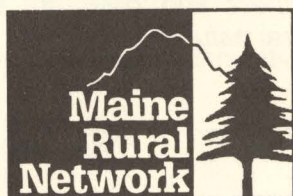
Sept. 13 - Day of Solidarity, 2-10pm. Join activists and friends on a hillside in So. Paris for a day of solidarity, enjoyment, reflection and resolution. Speakers include Brian Wilson, long time social justice activist who lost his legs in 1987. A train carrying military supplies to the Contras in Nicaragua refused to stop as he lay on the tracks in Concord, CA. FMI ☎ 743-2183.

Sept. 18-20 - INVERT's Grass-roots Organizers Workshop, at Camp Kieve, Nobleboro. FMI ☎ Nancy Galland 567-4075 or e-mail: gallender@acadia.net.

Sept. 25-27 - Common Ground Fair, Unity. MRN will share a table with MLGPA. Come by and get a membership decal and more information about our activities. FMI and/or to volunteer for table staffing ☎ 642-2015.

Oct. 3, Nov. 7, Dec. 5 - The Lesbian Health Project of the Mabel Wadsworth Women's Health Center in Bangor will be offering low-cost woman positive lesbian-centered health clinics, usually on the 1st Saturday of every month from 9am-12 noon. 362 Harlow St., Intown Plaza, Bangor. FMI or to make an appointment ☎ 947-5337.

Oct. 10 - The Civil Rights March in Bangor. MRN will have a table at the rally. Come and find out what's going on where you live. FMI about the march ☎ 1(888) 248-4511.



Local Groups Take Root

Welcome to the second issue of the *Network News*. For those of you who haven't heard of the Maine Rural Network (MRN), we were established last March, largely in response to the February 10, 1998 special election in which the civil rights law adding sexual orientation to Maine's Human Rights Statute was overturned. Two concepts came out of that defeat from within the sexual minority and allied communities. One was the need for education concerning the civil rights of gay people; the other was that work needed to be focused largely on rural areas. We found several working models for rural organizing and began to create MRN based on the Oregon Rural Organizing Project.

MRN was founded on the belief that through the establishment or locally organized groups, determining the needs of their own communities and working in coalition with others toward social justice, we could change the political reality of Maine.

Donna Redwing of HRC, in her 8/13 speech in Seattle, acknowledged the

"...extraordinary and courageous Gay and Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered people on the planet -- people who live in the backyard of the radical right, people who don't go to the big city to be safe, but people who stand their ground and say, 'Here I am and I will not move.'"

(From Seattle Gay News, 8/21/98)

How To Get Involved

By the end of June, MRN entered its second phase of operation, the establishment of local social justice groups. The groups are very much in their formative stages and are in need of more members who will help to shape the groups. If you live in one of the following areas and wish to join a group, please phone the appropriate contact person:

Ellsworth
Acadia Social Justice Alliance
Gabrielle Wellman
374-2140

Farmington
Foothills Fairness Project
Brian Kaufman
778-7379

Bowdoinham
Theresa Turgeon/Gracia Woodward
666-8147

If you are not located in one of these areas and want to form a group, please contact Naomi at 642-2015 or by e-mail: nomad@watchic.net.

**More Calendar
Inside**



Maine Rural Network

51 Shore Road
Standish, ME 04084
(207) 642-2015
e-mail: nomad@watchic.net

Naomi Falcone
Coordinator

Organizing Committee

Paul Alpert, Oxford
Naomi Falcone, Cumberland
Susan Farnsworth, Kennebec
David Fisher, Oxford
David Garrity, Cumberland
Rick Gowen, Cumberland
Phil Gray, Hancock
Dick Harrison, Aroostook
Mary Kay Kasper, Cumberland
Brian Kaufman, Franklin
Eilean MacKenzie, Washington
Janet May, Penobscot
Erica Rand, Androscoggin
Madeleine Winter, Cumberland

The Organizing Committee is open to anyone interested in helping shape a rural, grassroots network working for social justice

Mission Statement

The mission of the Maine Rural Network is to promote visibility and security for lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgender people living in rural Maine, and to work for social, educational and economic justice for all Maine people. The Maine Rural Network seeks to accomplish this by empowering individuals living in rural Maine to organize, establish and support autonomous groups locally and to create a network statewide.

Network News is published quarterly in March, June, September and December. If you would like to contribute a calendar item or short article please send it to us by the 15th of the month previous to the quarterly publication date.

Maine Rural Network
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Farmworkers Continue to Organize

As Maine Rural Network has begun to establish social justice groups there has also been outreach to other organizations that are compatible with MRN's mission, such as the Maine Rural Workers Coalition, the organization of the DeCoster workers.

The following article is a description of some of the working conditions at the DeCoster Egg Farm in Turner and the organizational efforts involving DeCoster workers.

The DeCoster Egg Farm is one of the largest egg producing operations in the nation. It has gained notoriety for its poor treatment of its workers and unsafe working conditions. Former Secretary of Labor Reich described the farm by saying it is "As dangerous and oppressive as any sweatshop we have seen." The Labor Department sued DeCoster for the untenable conditions they found both on the work site and in the housing supplied to the workers by DeCoster.

In spite of the suit and a great deal of public scrutiny of the operation little has changed. Workers continue to put in as much as 14 hour days to support themselves at a subsistence level. Weekends off are reserved for English speaking employees. Spanish speaking employees have off two non-consecutive days during the week. DeCoster has a long history of recruiting non-English speaking people in an attempt to keep employees isolated and vulnerable. As early as 1975, DeCoster managers recruited Vietnamese refugees and since 1975 the workforce has also included Czech and Latino workers. Workers have often worked as much as 100 hours a week without overtime pay and threats and intimi-

dation are common practices at the work site.

One of the programs launched by the Maine Rural Workers Coalition is connecting people who want to learn Spanish and English with each other on a one-to-one basis. This kind of effort is crucial to breaking down barriers between different communities and changing our concept of who "we" are.

The following is a list of projects Maine Rural Workers Coalition is planning to undertake: community organizing, Board of Directors training, job safety, environmental right to know, Spanish/English classes, job development and training, health education and services, transportation services, and day care center worker training. Maine Rural Workers Coalition wants to extend their organization to include agricultural workers from all over Maine. Farmworkers labor too many hours to be able to help with this organizing effort. MRWC thus depends on volunteers from the community to form the backbone of MRWC.

If you would like to get involved in this work please contact Naomi at 642-2015.

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The mission of the Maine Rural Workers Coalition is to promote programs and activities that help rural workers develop leadership skills, that serve workers and their families, that help support each other and protect their health and safety and that build communities which respect and celebrate their multicultural nature.

Great Gift Idea

by Erica Rand

Do your newly union-ized couple-friends already have a toaster? Does your lover really want more heart-shaped trinkets? Is your birthday pal or parent about to smile weakly at Nice Try Number 37?

Think about a giving a gift that contributes to something they don't have: the joy of witnessing social and economic justice for all peoples.

A donation to MRN in someone's honor makes a great gift for many occasions. At the very least, your gift helps spread the word about MRN, since the honoree gets a membership, the newsletter, AND A FABULOUS DECAL if you give \$20 or more. You might even be helping to get them involved -- in MRN, in other activism, in Maine or wherever they live.

Now really . . . given all that your MRN gift can do, won't you think twice before you head to the tie rack?

Calendar (Con't)

COMMON GROUND FAIR

MRN will share a table with MLGPA at the Common Ground Fair in Unity September 25, 26, 27. Come by and get a membership decal and more information about our activities. FMI and/or to volunteer for table staffing ☎ 642-2015.

Oct. 17 - The Acadia Social Justice Alliance - MRN's Ellsworth Group will hold a potluck membership drive at the UU Church in Ellsworth beginning at 4pm. If you are within commuting distance of Ellsworth and are interested in getting involved, please come. FMI ☎ Gabrielle Wellman 374-2140.

Oct. 24 - Changing Maine IV Gathering of Grassroots Organizers/Activists. Finding Common Ground II (Collaborating with People Different from Us). 8:30am-4pm at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Eastern Ave. (Rt. 17), Augusta. \$10 FMI ☎ 525-7776.

CIVIL RIGHTS MARCH

Join the MRN contingent in the Civil Rights March on October 10 in Bangor. We will also have a table at the rally - drop by and check us out!

Ongoing Events:

Sing to Change the World - 7pm on the 2nd and 4th Friday of each month. Hillview Community Center, Lewiston. ALL ARE WELCOME. FMI ☎ Claire or Deborah 674-2358.

Membership, Gift Membership and Donation Information

Name: _____
Phone/E-mail: _____
☐ Individual Membership \$20
☐ Gift Membership

Address: _____
Date: _____
☐ Organizational Membership \$35
☐ Tax deductible contribution
(over price of membership): \$ _____

Total amount enclosed: \$ _____

If you are giving a gift membership please fill in your information:

Name: _____
Phone/E-mail: _____

Address: _____
Date: _____

Help make Maine the way it should be for everyone!

Acadia Social Justice Alliance Outreach Event

With the loss of the February 10, 1998 election, an atmosphere has been created in Maine that make hate and intolerance more acceptable - the same atmosphere that made it possible to throw Charlie Howard off the bridge in Bangor in 1984; the same atmosphere that makes hate crimes possible against Latinos, African Americans, Native Americans, Jews, women and anyone else who may be a convenient target for

scapegoating; the same atmosphere that makes it acceptable for many people to live in poverty while a few have most of the wealth.

Maine Rural Network is dedicated to the belief that we can speak with one voice in opposition to hate whatever our background, wherever we live. We have it in our hands to create safety and justice for all people of Maine, from those living in the most populated areas to those living in the

most remote regions.

Come join us in the creation of democratic communities. On October 17, 1998, the Acadia Social Justice Alliance (ASJA), a local group of the Maine Rural Network, will hold a potluck and show the video Not In Our Town, which chronicles one community's response to hate crimes. This event will be held at the UU Church, 111 Court St., top of Bridge Hill, Ellsworth from 4-6:30pm.

INVERT/MRN
P.O. Box 776
Monroe, ME 04951

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